

# ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

# Famous Morganatic Marriages

Demy 8vo. Cloth gilt. 10/6 net.

---

## SOME PRESS OPINIONS OF THE BOOK

"Will tickle the palate."—*Times*.

"The most supercilious reader will devour the episodes on the sly."—*Daily Express*.

"Readers who enjoy pursuing the domestic adventures of royalty will find entertainment to their taste."—*Daily Telegraph*.

"All very nice."—*Referee*.

"... Recorded with considerable humour and insight."—*Saturday Herald*.

"... His book is brisk and readable."—*Liverpool Post*.

"The book sets out in pleasantly-written, well-studied and eminently readable chapters the circumstances of twenty cases of a union more or less exactly described as matrimonial between spouses of whom one is of royal blood, the other not."—*Scotsman*.

---

LONDON : STANLEY PAUL & CO.

31 ESSEX STREET, W.C.2

# ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

By  
CHARLES KINGSTON

AUTHOR OF  
"FAMOUS MORGANATIC MARRIAGES," ETC.



LONDON  
STANLEY PAUL & CO.  
31 ESSEX STREET, STRAND, W.C.2

*First published in 1921*



# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. AN UNHAPPY QUEEN . . . .	9
II. SOPHIE OF SWEDEN . . . .	22
III. THE TRAGIC EMPRESS . . . .	34
IV. A DUTCH KING'S MARRIAGE . . . .	47
V. THE EMPEROR WHO CHANGED HIS MIND .	58
VI. A ROYAL ROGUE . . . .	82
VII. QUEEN NATALIE OF SERBIA . . . .	94
VIII. KING HUMBERT'S ENGAGEMENT . . .	107
IX. THE PRINCE AND THE FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTER . . . .	117
X. THE KING AND THE DANCER . . . .	129
XI. A RUSSIAN LOVE TRAGEDY . . . .	141
XII. THE ELOPEMENT THAT FAILED . . . .	153
XIII. A ROYAL ROMANCE IN AMERICA . . .	165
XIV. A BELGIAN MARRIAGE . . . .	177
XV. A CZAR'S SECRET ENGAGEMENT . . . .	189
XVI. THE LADY-IN-WAITING . . . .	203
XVII. A SHATTERED ROMANCE . . . .	215
XVIII. AN IMPERIAL MATCH-BREAKER . . .	226
XIX. THE PRINCE AND THE AMERICAN GIRL .	236



# Royal Romances and Tragedies

## CHAPTER I

### AN UNHAPPY QUEEN

IN the late sixties of the last century a certain Bavarian duke went to Vienna to find a suitable bride. For at least three generations the Bavarian and Austrian royal families had intermarried, and Duke Ludwig was, therefore, only following precedent when he decided to ally himself by marriage with the Emperor Francis Joseph. Ludwig was not at the time a great matrimonial prize. There were many lives between him and the throne, and, in addition to his poverty, it was hinted that he had shown signs of having inherited that eccentricity which in humbler born folk is termed madness.

However, Ludwig, rather good-looking, tall, and with a pleasant cast of countenance, was not given the cold shoulder by the Austrian emperor, who was aware that there were more archduchesses in Vienna than suitors. He was only too glad to get rid of any of them, and he welcomed Ludwig with open arms, entertained him lavishly, although the Austrian people were for the most part suffering from acute poverty, and introduced him to so many relatives that Ludwig found it quite embarrassing

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

to make a choice. The young man was out for a bride with money and influence. He was anxious to have a wife who would help him to battle against the intriguers in Munich. King Ludwig, his cousin, was not yet mad enough to justify his deposition, but Duke Ludwig lived in hopes, although there were other heirs, and the king might marry.

But it was not as a future king that the Archduchess Maria Theresa regarded him. She was young, pretty in a severe way, dark-eyed and haughty, imposing in manner. As a girl she had been remarkable only for her jealousy and spite, and when Ludwig first met her she was suffering from a bad attack of "self-pity," and was posing as a martyr, because she was not happy at home. But there was no doubt of her strength of mind. Perhaps her obstinacy and self-will bordered on insanity. Whatever it was, her parents were delighted when the young Bavarian duke proposed to her, and the arrangements for the ceremony were hurried forward, as the bride's family, knowing that his reputation for eccentricity of conduct was not unjustified, wished to get her off their hands before he had time to change his mind. It was not a case of marrying for money or position, so far as the archduchess was concerned, for she had both already. Her parents wished to get rid of her, and she knew it, and she was just as relieved as they were when the time came for her to go with her husband to Bavaria in the year they were married, 1868.

When she arrived in Munich in those far-off days history was being made. The king, already exhibiting symptoms of violent passion which ultimately led to his dethronement and death, at once inti-

## AN UNHAPPY QUEEN

---

mated to his cousin that he was prepared to receive his bride; and, arrayed in all her finery, the Austrian archduchess, who was, of course, a relative of the king's, appeared at court. She was kept waiting for an hour, and when at last the king came in he just glanced casually in her direction, and, without a word, took his departure.

The archduchess, already fatigued and irritated to the point of tears, protested in a passionate temper against this treatment. She wanted to return to Vienna at once, but her husband persuaded her to forgive his majesty, pointing out that Ludwig II was not responsible for his actions. Perhaps he told her that they were nearer the throne than she thought, for only ambition would have made Maria Theresa put up with such an insult.

But quite apart from the uncomfortable position created by the king's madness, the Austrian archduchess had plenty of worries of her own. She found that the Bavarians did not like her. They considered that her ideas were out of date. She was popularly supposed to rule her feeble-minded husband with a rod of iron, and there was proof that, on one occasion when annoyed by the indifference of the people of Munich to her when she appeared in their midst, she had declared viciously that it would do them good if the methods of the Spanish Inquisition were introduced to teach them manners. Her haughtiness, spite, and jealousy became proverbial, and her husband's relatives soon made up their minds to see as little of their formidable connection by marriage as possible. The archduchess retorted by assuming a demeanour of insulted majesty, but owing to the mental state of King Ludwig she could not try to enlist

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

his support. On the few occasions they met he grossly insulted her, and his usual term of reference to her was "That Austrian cat!" This was duly reported to Maria Theresa, whose only comment was that evidently Heaven had ordained that she should suffer in this world, and that she was resigned to her lot.

Behind this mask of reserve, however, there was the ever-growing terror caused by the knowledge that there was madness not only in her husband's family but in her own. The woman, despite her cold pride, lived in dread of Ludwig's awful fate overtaking her. In the middle of the night she would startle the palace with shrieks, and when asked for an explanation would declare that she had seen horrible faces in the darkness. After that she had her bedroom illuminated all through the night, whilst a maid was in attendance in an adjoining room ready to come to her mistress's side at a moment's notice.

A son was born to her in 1869, and her first question to the doctors was, "Is he all right?" They knew that she was not referring to his physical but his mental condition. The doctors declared that they had never seen a finer infant. Maria Theresa burst into tears of gratitude, but she was premature, as events proved.

Meanwhile, her husband made a valiant attempt to cast off the shackles of his wife. He wanted to lead a quiet country life; she urged him to remain in Munich so as to be on hand if a revolution took place, and the Bavarians dethroned mad King Ludwig. The ambitious Austrian was hungry for the spoils of the throne. She wanted to be a queen. It was her consuming desire. She craved for power until it became a mania.

## AN UNHAPPY QUEEN

---

She knew that King Ludwig was mad, and that his brother, Otto, could never actually reign. Besides the brothers there was only their uncle, who was her father-in-law, between her husband and the throne. When it was announced that King Ludwig had refused to marry, Maria Theresa's joy was very obvious. The papers of the day commented on it sarcastically. A working men's society passed a resolution imploring the mad king to marry and have an heir "to save the country from the Austrian cat." The resolution was printed as a broadsheet and a score of copies sent to the archduchess, who completely lost her temper, and in a hoarse passion sent for the Munich chief of police and ordered him to arrest those who had insulted her. The official diplomatically reminded her that he could not take orders from one who was, after all, only a private citizen. The Austrian archduchess contemptuously dismissed him after accusing him of being in league with her enemies.

Amid this excitement and the stress of political events the years passed quickly. The war with France came, and Maria's husband put on his general's uniform and rode off to fight for Prussia; but the King of Prussia, who was no fool, issued orders that a careful watch should be kept on all the Bavarian royalties, from the king downwards, to make sure that they did not do anything to injure the army of the Fatherland. Poor Duke Ludwig was given a harmless task far away from the firing line, and when the Emperor William I decorated him "for bravery in the field" the not-too-intelligent young man was enraptured. Mad King Ludwig also took part in that campaign, and similarly "earned" distinction.

All the time the Archduchess Maria Theresa

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

was carefully watching the movements of King Ludwig. She rejoiced when he remained a bachelor, and when in the eighties Bavarian ministers held numerous councils to debate the question of Ludwig's deposition, she used all her influence to have the king removed. She prevailed in the end, and a regency was established. Then King Ludwig committed suicide, and his brother Otto, also a raving lunatic, was declared to be king, but only in name, for the regency continued.

With the dawn of the nineties it was certain that if she lived long enough her ambition would be gratified, and she would become a queen. That fact, of course, raised her status in Bavaria enormously. She was now the leader of a group of Austro-Bavarians who were plotting to benefit themselves at the expense of the people. Duke Ludwig looked on without daring to interfere, and so helpless did he prove that even his own son, a dark-featured, sombre youth of ungovernable passion, openly despised and defied him.

But for all her success the archduchess was not happy. The mental condition of her son, Prince Rupprecht, required the constant attendance of brain specialists. He could not be educated in the ordinary way, and tutors who tried to knock a little sense into him were compelled to rush from the palace to escape his violence. Once the young cub committed a savage assault on a young girl in the streets of Munich, and when asked why he did so complained that she had stared at him. The incident was reported to his mother, who had a fit of hysterics. She was not too strong mentally herself, and it was generally understood that owing to her life-long habit of brooding over imaginary



## AN UNHAPPY QUEEN

---

troubles she was to a great extent responsible for her son's unhappy lack of mental balance.

This terror of insanity has always haunted her, and during her latter years she has had good reason for her fears. The volatile Crown Prince of Prussia visited the Bavarian court shortly before he married. It was thought that he might be attracted to one of the many Bavarian princesses, but on the first day of his visit he blurted out the opinion that all Bavarians were lunatics, and that he intended to steer clear of them. The archduchess heard the insult and never forgave him.

In 1911 her husband had a nervous breakdown, and this almost drove the archduchess mad. A rumour had reached her that the Bavarians wished to make a clean sweep of their lunatic royal family and start all over again with a clean and healthy reigning house. Maria Theresa took extraordinary pains to keep the nature of Duke Ludwig's illness a secret. She realised that if it became public he would be deposed, and that as Prince Rupprecht's fits of insanity were no secret, he, too, would follow his father into seclusion. She succeeded to a great extent, but two years later she came to the conclusion that if she wished to be queen it was a case of now or never. Using all her influence she persuaded her husband to end the regency and declare himself king, and thus nine months before the outbreak of the great world war the duke became King Ludwig III and Maria Theresa was his queen.

They had to pay a price for their promotion, which proved almost the bitterest humiliation Queen Maria Theresa has ever had to suffer. During her husband's regency the present ex-kaiser had ever been a threatening personality,

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGÉDIES

always the one obstacle between them and the throne, a cold-blooded, sinister blackmailer who was willing to agree to the accession of Ludwig, but who demanded payment for his acquiescence. The price was that the new king should practically hand over to the kaiser the control of his army. Henceforth William II was the actual head of Bavaria's army corps; in other words, he was the virtual ruler of the country. It was, in fact, a surrender of independence, but the kaiser would accept nothing less. He was secretly preparing for war, and as he knew the Bavarian people disliked the Prussians he wished to make sure of their support when the great campaign began.

Queen Maria Theresa, accustomed to ruling her husband, tried to save him from his hungry overlord. She had one interview with William in the grounds of her own palace. The "war lord" was in one of his boorish moods, and he did not spare the archduchess who wished to be queen. He laid emphasis on the fact that King Otto, the insane brother of mad King Ludwig II, was still alive, and that her husband was not reputed to be too strong-minded. He swore that he was risking unpopularity himself in assisting to foist a new king on Bavaria during the lifetime of their legal monarch, and he worked upon Maria Theresa's feeling to such an extent that she left him abruptly and retired to her boudoir, where she collapsed altogether. She felt that because of the price they were paying, her husband and herself would be only king and queen in name.

Her forebodings were justified. King Ludwig III surrendered any independence that Bavaria possessed to the kaiser in the autumn of 1913, and on the 5th of November—auspicious date—

## AN UNHAPPY QUEEN

---

he ascended the throne and Rupprecht became crown prince.

The latter was a sullen and sulky husband and father. In 1900, much against his mother's wish, he had married a daughter of the Duke Karl, the most popular prince in Bavaria and the father of the present Queen of the Belgians. The archduchess had disliked Duke Karl because he had become "a common doctor," and was actually attending the poor, specialising in the care of the eyes. But Rupprecht, a proud, ill-balanced person, with his mother's weakness for imagining trouble, would have none of her interference, and the marriage took place. Two children have been born of it, and both are "suspect" so far as their brains are concerned.

However, the beginning of the year 1914 saw the Austrian archduchess a queen, but an unhappy one. To her proud spirit the knowledge that she was only a queen in name was most humiliating, and although she had succeeded in getting her own way on most occasions, she was not contented. Her hopes centred in Rupprecht, the crown prince, whose hatred of the Crown Prince of Prussia was notorious. He was actually plotting to widen the gulf between the countries when the war started. Immediately he tried to forget his own worries, and as his father was practically a semi-idiot it devolved on him to organise and lead the army of Bavaria.

He offered loyal service to the then kaiser, and William received him graciously at Potsdam, where a great conference was held. Bethmann Hollweg, at that time German Chancellor, sided with Rupprecht when the latter demanded a military position in keeping with his rank, but to

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

this the Crown Prince of Prussia offered the most strenuous opposition, and with characteristic uncouthness boldly hinted at Rupprecht's suspected insanity as a disqualification for high command in the field. It was as much as those present could do to keep the men apart. If the Bavarian prince had got his fingers round the throat of his puny insulter the latter would have suffered badly, but, of course, the presence of the kaiser restrained them. However, later they met outside the Sans Souci Palace, but a group of officers of the Prussian prince's staff closed around him, and Rupprecht was baulked of his revenge.

"That idiot!" was the Prussian's polite way of referring to his cousin of Bavaria, and he took good care that Rupprecht heard it. The two men had been for years intensely jealous of one another. The ex-Crown Prince of Prussia hated the Bavarian royal family, and he loathed Rupprecht's mother because she would never tolerate any of his stable manners in her presence. When he was a small boy and his ill-manners used to send the kaiser into shrieks of laughter, it was Maria Theresa of Austria whose cutting remarks brought the performance to a close.

"When I am kaiser I will save Bavaria from its madmen," said the crown prince in a club in Berlin some ten years ago. The threat was conveyed to Rupprecht, who promptly sent a challenge to the Crown Prince of Prussia. That challenge was ignored. The junior Wilhelm believed in duelling, but Rupprecht was an expert swordsman and shot, and so the ex-kaiser's cub decided that it was beneath his dignity to fight.

Queen Maria Theresa, throughout her latter days, was hampered by a nerveless husband, and

## AN UNHAPPY QUEEN

---

terrified by the spectacle of her son's growing madness, and yet she clung to life as though frightened of the next. She knew that the Crown Prince Rupprecht was but a pawn in the hands of Germany, and the newspaper reports of "The Army of the Crown Prince Rupprecht" did not deceive her. She was aware that in reality he occupied only a subordinate position, and that a German general had the task of leading the Bavarians.

Once he rushed back to Munich to complain to his mother that he was being insulted before his own soldiers. The queen could only meekly advise him to submit to the implacable tyranny of the kaiser.

"He is waiting for an opportunity to rob you of your birthright," she told him. "Prussia is growing at our expense. God knows I often wish that victory is not to be Germany's."

Rupprecht, whose brain was not as subtle as his mother's, was shocked at this unpatriotic expression of opinion, but he must know now that she was right. Bavaria's greatest enemy was not France, Russia, or Britain, but Prussia. "Let us hope that this war will really unite Germany," said Bethmann Hollweg in the Reichstag two years ago. He emphasised the word "unite," and the world knew that the ex-kaiser's object was to make himself Emperor of Germany. At that time he was only German Emperor.

The beginning of the winter of 1916 found the people of Bavaria in a state of great discontent. Thousands of wounded soldiers had returned from the front, and all agreed that Bavarians were being thrust into the most dangerous positions, whilst Prussian soldiers were kept in the third and fourth

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIËS

lines of trenches. Once twenty thousand men from Munich and neighbourhood were drafted into the Crown Prince of Prussia's army before Verdun, and ninety per cent. of them were killed. The reports caused loud murmurings, and there was a big demonstration in Munich against these injustices. The local papers hinted that the royal family were the willing dupes of the Hohenzollerns. The irony of it! Queen Maria Theresa sat in her uncomfortable palace and shuddered as she heard the cries of the mob. But worse was to follow.

A series of riots in the vicinity of the palace ensued. The mention of Queen Maria Theresa's name was the signal for hootings and booings from the crowd. Stones were flung at the windows, and the queen narrowly escaped being struck.

Queen Theresa, a lonely woman, ever unsatisfied, ever hungry, although her greatest ambition of all—to be a queen—had been satisfied, spent the latter days of her life practically a prisoner in her palace. It brought her small comfort that her son was in no danger from the enemy. She knew that there was a greater danger at home—the assassin. Rupprecht was not popular. The Bavarians realised that Ludwig III was too weak-minded ever to have been responsible for the ruin of their country, and the queen believed that one day they would avenge themselves by taking the life of the crown prince.

A few years ago she said to an intimate friend: "I am Queen of Bavaria, but unless the war is over within six months my son will never reign."

The sad, heart-broken woman awaited the end, but not with patience, for she was gripped by the terrors that haunted the royal house of Bavaria.

## AN UNHAPPY QUEEN

---

She had alienated all her friends through her pride and temper, and she had no one to whom she could appeal; and when, as ex-Queen of Bavaria, she passed away on February 4, 1919, it was with the knowledge that the Prussian policy of her husband's ministers had smashed the dynasty.

## CHAPTER II

### SOPHIE OF SWEDEN

KING OSCAR II of Sweden ascended the throne with a grievance, and to the day of his death—which event took place in 1907—he generally contrived to have something to grumble about. In the first place, his elder brother, King Charles XV, married a princess who was also a millionairess, while Oscar's bride brought him a comparatively trivial fortune.

It happened that King Charles's only child was a girl, and Oscar succeeded to the kingship in 1872, but not to any of the millions which had belonged to his brother and his wife. All their money was, of course, settled on their daughter, the Princess Louise, and Oscar was left to bear the expenses of a position which, never too well provided for by the Swedish people, seemed very hard work after the easy life of Charles XV. Oscar, in truth, wanted the millions as well, and, perhaps, one reason why he was never kind to his wife was that he thought it was her fault that they were not rich beyond the dreams of avarice. Foolish, stupid, and unreasonable, but nevertheless he believed it.

Queen Sophie was all her life a good mother and a wise queen, and in her old age she found considerable relief from her troubles by devoting herself to the science of matchmaking; but she



## SOPHIE OF SWEDEN

---

was never really happy, and if she had not decided to sacrifice herself for the sake of her children, she could have left her husband with the knowledge that she would have the approval of every decent person in Europe.

Yet when Oscar of Sweden had come a-wooing to the pretty little village where the Princess Sophie of Nassau and her family were staying, he had looked every inch a prince, and his charming manners, courtly grace, and his interest in literature and the arts, had won the admiration of the Nassaus and the love of the Princess Sophie. It was something unique in her experience to meet a prince who was not a boor. She had been brought up amongst a crowd of hungry Prussian princes, who openly sneered at women, and spent their nights in drink and dissipation. It was not wonderful, therefore, that when Oscar proposed, Sophie should have been delighted to tell him that she loved him dearly, and would be a faithful and true helpmate all her life. And she kept her promise, too.

The marriage took place in due course, and Sophie settled down in Sweden, anxious to win the affection and respect of her brother-in-law's subjects. At this time Norway was also part of the Swedish king's dominions, and both countries quickly grew to like Sophie. She and her husband were quite democratic. They mixed freely with all classes, and between them gained a popularity which augured well for the future. It was generally expected by this time that King Oscar would succeed his brother, though there was a slight chance that, after all, a son might be born to the king.

Meanwhile, Sophie was fast losing her illusions.

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

Her husband prided himself on being democratic enough to know everybody, but his wife noticed that he always had something to grumble about and to be displeased with. To add to Sophie's difficulties one or two German women descended upon Sweden. They were minor relations of princelings remotely related to the princess, and came to Sweden because they imagined that they might secure good husbands by their friendship with the extremely popular Princess Sophie. They took advantage of Sophie's good nature to plot in secret against her, and they twisted and distorted almost every word the princess uttered, and in this shape they were retailed to Oscar, a man, as I have already said, who was fond of collecting grievances and brooding over them.

Even when the royal couple had a family to look after, Oscar continued to neglect his wife. By now it was certain that he was to be the next king, and his position was, of course, of greater importance, and his wife had to do a great deal of entertaining. Princess Sophie gave balls and dinners, and as often as not her husband would not be present, and the royal hostess would have to go through the farce of receiving her guests with smiles and cheery words, while all the time her heart would be near to breaking point.

But she kept her sorrows a secret from all but the very few. Indeed, for many years they were generally believed to be the happiest royalties in the world. Oscar was a very pleasant man to meet, and his tact was proverbial, and those who made his acquaintance pronounced him to be one of the most charming of princes. Princess Sophie, too, was never seen to be depressed. She was ever

## SOPHIE OF SWEDEN

---

cheerful, and apparently absolutely free from care, being too absorbed in her duties, social and maternal, to have time to think of anything else.

But her few real friends knew that she was one of the unhappiest women of modern times. She had loved Oscar once, and it had taken a long series of acts of cruelty and unkindness to kill that love, but the effect was such that Sophie, before she became queen, would have welcomed death had it not been for her children.

The first inkling the public had that all was not well resulted from a semi-state ball, which Sophie gave shortly before her husband's accession to the throne. It was the social event of the year, and everybody of importance in Sweden and Norway was present. It was expected that Oscar would utilise the opportunity to make the acquaintance of newcomers into society, men and women who would exercise considerable influence in the days when he would be king, but Oscar never turned up at the function. But amongst the hundreds present at the ball Sophie appeared to be the only one unaware of the absence of her husband. She was the life and soul of the party, and her demeanour so impressed her friends that many of them came to the conclusion that they were wrong, and that Oscar was not giving his happy-looking wife a moment's misery.

Scenes between husband and wife, however, were frequent in those days. What wife and mother could restrain her anger at seeing her good name being dragged through the mire? When Sophie realised that protests were utterly futile she accepted her lot with resignation, and tried to continue to act in public the rôle of the contented wife.

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

In 1872 Oscar became king, and personal pride was tempered by the knowledge that he was in debt, and that he would be greatly hampered by the smallness of his income. Sophie, as usual forgiving and generous, did all she could to help him, and she was able to raise a goodly sum to tide over a particular financial crisis arising out of his indiscretions. But he was not even grateful, and Queen Sophie was glad that they had to tour the courts of Europe immediately after their accession to the throne, for in other people's houses she would be safe from his cruelties.

They went first to Berlin, where the old Emperor William I was still gloating over the successes of his army in the Franco-Prussian War and the receipt of the huge indemnity the losers had paid him. He was at this time enormously wealthy, and Sophie, instructed by King Oscar, hinted broadly that if his majesty offered to help his royal cousin of Sweden the offer would not be rejected. But the Prussian king was too fond of grabbing to tolerate the idea of giving, and the scarcely-veiled request was ignored. A miserable time ensued for Sophie, so miserable, indeed, that she was forced to confess to William that her marriage had been a failure. Queen Sophie was a German princess by birth, and as the emperor was the head of all the royal families of the Fatherland she hoped that he would be able to influence Oscar and make him understand that a princess must be treated properly. But old William, who had outlived any faith in human nature he may have once possessed, dismissed her appeal brusquely.

"I can do nothing, Sophie," he is reported to have said. "Unhappy marriages are the lot of people in our station. If I were to try to settle the

## SOPHIE OF SWEDEN

matrimonial difficulties of my relatives I should never have a moment's peace. I have only known one really happy marriage, and that is my nephew's, and he went to England for a bride. No, my dear Sophie, I am helpless. Perhaps Oscar may be a better king than he was a prince."

The cynical advice of the hardened old war-maker convinced Sophie that she was without a remedy, and that she must suffer in silence henceforth. After that Oscar found her pliant to his will. She never complained, and his cruelty became worse than ever. The proud queen saw herself displaced by Oscar's temporary favourites, and she knew that even her own German relations were in secret sympathy with her husband.

But Oscar was not happy. His finances improved, but by then he had other grievances. He was greatly disturbed by the beginning of the bloodless agitation which eventually wrested the kingdom of Norway from him, and when he was advised that his health was failing his terror was pitiful. He rushed off to Bournemouth to undergo a rest cure, tearfully protesting that he was reformed, and forgetting his promises to his devoted wife the moment he began to feel better. Then he discovered that his younger son, Prince Oscar, was in love with Miss Munck, one of the queen's ladies-in-waiting. This infuriated the old sinner, who stormed and raved and threatened to expel both son and mother from his domains if they took steps to effect the marriage. He knew that Sophie was in favour of the match. Perhaps she had forgotten the statement of the Emperor William I about the general unhappiness that prevailed in royal circles. She knew that her son's heart was in this business, and, womanlike, she was

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

anxious that the course of true love should "run smooth." King Oscar, however, was adamant, and for over two years he had a watch kept over his son's movements. Miss Munck's lot was the reverse of happy, and it seemed likely that the out-of-date ideas and old-fashioned tyranny of the king would wreck two young lives.

It was a brave act on the part of Queen Sophie to stand up to her husband, and boldly declare herself on the side of her son. She had suffered bitterly at his hands, and there was hardly a day in her married life when she had not been forced to shed the tears of humiliation, but in spite of this, or, no doubt, because of it, she meant to see that Oscar, the son she loved, should not miss the opportunity of his life's happiness.

While the king, sulkily nursing this grievance, continued to oppose, the lovers laid their plans, and one day the prince presented an ultimatum to his father, informing him that he was going to be married with or without his permission, and that he and his bride were prepared to live in exile if denied a welcome home.

King Oscar did not reply, but he took no action against the lovers. I believe that he was advised by his own Prime Minister to keep quiet. The Swedes and the Norwegians are essentially democratic, simple-minded, and romantic, and Oscar was told that he would make himself dangerously unpopular if he exhibited open hostility towards the prince of his own blood who was marrying a girl for love.

The ceremony took place at Bournemouth, and Queen Sophie's gracious presence more than compensated for the surly absence of the bridegroom's father. It was, of course, a certainty that a man

## SOPHIE OF SWEDEN

---

of King Oscar's ideas and mode of life should have been quite wrong in his gloomy prophecies as to the result of his son's unconventional marriage. The prince from that day to this has never had cause to regret his decision.

When the doctors bluntly told Oscar that he must lead a very careful life he was terrified into obeying them, and he sought distraction in political affairs, but Queen Sophie's lot was not thereby improved. A vicious middle age was replaced by a snarling, querulous, quarrelsome old age. When Norwegian statesmen worried the king with problems relating to the desire of Norway for complete independence he visited his displeasure not upon the offenders, but upon his wife. It seemed as if he could not live without quarrelling with someone, and her majesty, who had put up with a lot more than this petty tyranny, meekly suffered.

A series of political crises were followed by an attempt to patch up the difference that existed between Sweden and Norway, and then King Oscar had a nervous breakdown, and was compelled, much against his will, to hand over the government for a time to his eldest son. A few months afterwards he resumed the reins, although the doctors disapproved, and almost immediately the crown prince had to be called upon again to discharge the duties of regent.

Queen Sophie nursed her husband with that unselfish devotion for which she was famous. I do not suppose that any other woman would have forgiven her husband as she did, and even when her ministrations elicited only curses from her patient she ascribed his ingratitude to ill-health, and did not swerve from her path of duty.

It was believed in political circles that the king

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

had not long to live, and on 'that account it' was practically settled that the disunion between Sweden and Norway should be postponed until the accession of the crown prince. But Oscar managed to cling to life. Once it had been a life of pleasure. Now it meant a diseased brain and body, and a perpetual rebellion against grievances, which, if imaginary, seemed very real to the old monarch, who called in vain for the delights of bygone days. Of course, it was not possible for him to exercise his spite upon his subjects. The times were too democratic for that, and the liberty-loving Scandinavians would have stood no nonsense from him. However, there was always the devoted, uncomplaining Queen Sophie, and with incredible meanness he delighted in inflicting pain upon her.

Rumours flooded the Courts of Europe that the queen, now an old woman, was suffering acutely, but as she had not complained for thirty years, and as she was so sweet and charming, foreigners found it impossible to credit the statements of the gossips. Whenever King Oscar and his wife received relatives from other countries their outward show of devotion to one another caused general envy. I remember that in those days, whenever a royal scandal was reported in the newspapers, a reference, by way of contrast, to the happiness of Sweden's king and queen was usually tacked on to the article, and often other royalties were bidden to follow the example of their majesties, and be happy. Queen Sophie must have come across these complimentary press references, and they must have caused her many a heartache, though I have no doubt that she was pleased, for it was her



## SOPHIE OF SWEDEN

---

principal ambition to appear happy before the world.

King Oscar always joined issue with his wife on the important matter of their children's marriages. He invariably left Queen Sophie to arrange the preliminaries, and then he would step in and raise objections. Hardly once did he approve, and he generally made everybody concerned unhappy before giving a grudging consent. He objected alike to princess and lady-in-waiting, proving that his opposition to Prince Oscar's choice was really due to his jealous temper. None of his offspring can be said to have married badly, yet poor Queen Sophie suffered acutely because it was her task to fight all the battles of the princes, who wisely deemed her better qualified than they were to overcome the unreasoning opposition of their father. However, if she endured contumely on her children's account she earned their undying love and gratitude, and, perhaps, too, she found in the pleasures of matchmaking some compensation for her failure to win the devotion of her husband.

The day came, however, when so far as her children were concerned there were no more opportunities for arranging marriages, but in her old age she resumed her career by taking in hand the matrimonial affairs of those of her grandchildren old enough to think of marrying. For years she had wished to see Sweden drawn closer to Britain by means of a marriage alliance between her family and that of Queen Victoria's, and once she almost succeeded in finding an English princess for one of her sons. It was the boorish attitude of King Oscar that influenced Queen Victoria to put an end to the affair by peremptorily intimating to the descendant of Napoleon's one-time private soldier

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

that he was guilty of impertinence in speaking disparagingly of one of her relations. It was a slap in the face for Oscar, but he failed to appreciate the lesson.

However, when the eldest son of Queen Sophie's eldest son was of sufficient age to justify a venture in the sea of matrimony Queen Sophie turned once again to Britain. She and King Edward were good friends, his majesty always having admired the queen's strength of character and her gracious charm. It had occurred to Queen Sophie that one of the daughters of the Duke and Duchess of Connaught would be just the right person to share the throne of Sweden with her grandson when his turn came to reign, and, King Edward cordially approving, Prince Gustav was sent to Egypt when the Connaughts were visiting that land of mystery.

It was, of course, a certainty that he would fall in love with one of the princesses, and his choice proved to be Princess Margaret. Her royal highness was impressed by the simplicity and goodness of the young prince, and she consented to wed him. Theirs may be said to have been a union of hearts, and it is no secret that Princess Margaret, who had dreaded the possibility of finding herself married to a German, was greatly relieved at realising that the fates had reserved for her a gentleman and a prince who could be trusted to make her happy. So the last match brought about by Queen Sophie was the most successful of all, for the late Crown Princess of Sweden succeeded to the popularity enjoyed by her husband's grandmother.

King Oscar, who had a thoroughly wholesome respect for King Edward, only grumbled to his wife about the alliance with the Connaught family, and Queen Sophie could afford to smile, knowing

## SOPHIE OF SWEDEN

---

that her husband's grandfather had been a private soldier when the ancestors of the Duke and Duchess of Connaught had been ruling empires. But she understood Oscar's peculiar temperament, and did not retort by reminding him that it was only her marriage to him that had caused the royal families of Europe to accept the head of the House of Bernadotte as one of themselves.

The last few years of Oscar's life were restless years. He had many contests with his ministers and parliament, and he lived to see Norway an independent kingdom, but from 1904 onwards he was merely king in name, his son ruling in his stead, and the latter's great commonsense and statesmanship saved the situation when the crisis with Norway occurred.

In 1907 Oscar II of Sweden died at the age of seventy-eight, and Queen Sophie survived him for some years, the most venerable and venerated figure in the country, where she was loved by all classes. When she passed away the world lost a notable character, and the cause of peace a champion. She will live in Sweden's history, long after her husband's name has become a shadowy memory, as that of a noble wife and mother, who suffered so that her children might be happy.

## CHAPTER III

### THE TRAGIC EMPRESS

It is difficult to realise, when one recalls the frail, age-stricken figure of the ex-Empress Eugenie, that once upon a time she was the greatest beauty in Europe, and the head of the gayest and most brilliant court of the nineteenth century. A triumphant youth, a miserable middle-age, and a lonely old age. That, in brief, is the history of the very remarkable woman who lived from 1826 to 1920.

When William Kirkpatrick, of the once prosperous Kirkpatricks of Closeburn, emigrated from Scotland to America, he could not have been expected to realise that he was to become famous as the grandfather of an empress. Kirkpatrick prospered sufficiently in the United States to obtain the responsible appointment of consul at Malaga, where he married a Spanish girl. His daughter made a good match, becoming the wife of a grandee of the first class, the Count de Montijo, and the result of this marriage was two daughters, who were beautiful, witty, and charming. Both achieved eminence, but it was reserved for the younger girl to leave her mark on history.

Eugenie was educated in Britain, Spain, and France, finishing up in Paris, where her rank and her beauty gave her the *entr  e* to the most

## THE TRAGIC EMPRESS

---

exclusive circles. She was remarkable even as a young girl. Years before there was any idea that she would wear a crown it was often remarked that she carried herself like a queen. The dark eyes and the red lips were irresistible. Eugenie had suitors before she was sixteen, but she only laughed at them and went her own way.

She was typically Spanish in many respects, yet there is no doubt that from her grandfather she inherited restless ambition, perseverance, and fearlessness. There was nothing of the languid beauty about her, and to the end of her days she retained that mordant wit for which she was famous.

Her real entry into Parisian society took place at a state ball attended by the very cream of French society. Napoleon III was then styled the Prince-President, and he was very popular with his countrymen, but this was nothing to the fascination he exercised over women. I do not suppose there has ever been a man who enthralled women with the ease Napoleon III did. He seemed to be a magnet to the sex, and his princely entertainments brought together the most renowned beauties in Europe. It will therefore be seen that Eugenie had many rivals when she became one of his friends more than sixty years ago. Her first appearance was a triumph, for when she entered the ballroom at the Tuileries she created a sensation, and indisputably became the Queen of Beauty.

To say that she took Parisian society by storm is not an exaggeration. From that day hardly any other person was talked about. Eugenie de Montijo had wit and charm as well as a lovely face, and in common with all the men Napoleon was enchanted. A few days later he drove out with her,

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

and after that he was regularly seen in her company. Of course the women hated her, and in their rage and jealousy they tried to boycott her, but the attempt failed miserably. No ball could be a success unless the reigning beauty was there. The men simply would not come, and so even her deadliest rivals had to invite Eugenie to accept their invitations. For all that they did their best to drive her out of Paris. There were at least a score of rival beauties clamouring for Napoleon's favours. He was kind to them all, but to Eugenie he was something more.

Then followed a series of political crises which ended in the establishment of the empire. Napoleon III was proclaimed Emperor of the French, and he was so excited and delighted by his success in restoring the fortunes of his family that he celebrated his accession by dinner parties, balls, theatrical performances, carnivals, and every form of diversion. Eugenie was always to the fore, and if ever a girl thoroughly enjoyed herself it was she. She seemed to have no care in the world, for she was beautiful, young, happy, and in perfect health.

But while political events absorbed the men, the women only concerned themselves with the great question, "Whom will Napoleon marry?" They knew that he was trying to form a matrimonial alliance with a reigning house, and it was common knowledge that he had proposed to at least four girls, all princesses of the blood royal, and had been rejected, but then he had been just a more or less needy adventurer, with no prospects except those of a genteel exile. Now he was emperor of one of the greatest nations in the world, and lord of a brilliant and artistic court.

## THE TRAGIC EMPRESS

---

It is interesting to note, by the way, that amongst the ladies Napoleon proposed to were the mothers of the present ex-kaiserin and our own queen. They rejected him, but one may be pardoned for speculating on all that might have been if he had succeeded with either.

But now that he was emperor, Napoleon, although well aware that he would be very favourably received, did not intend to go to foreign courts for a bride. He thought only of Eugenie de Montijo, and if he hesitated to propose it was because he feared criticism. His hand, however, was forced by an incident at a ball in his own palace.

All the beauty and intellect of France were there, and the dance was proceeding merrily when Eugenie, her lovely face flushed with anger and her eyes on fire, went up to Napoleon and complained that she had been grossly insulted by a certain lady who had been remarkable for her hatred of the young girl. The emperor bowed gravely. "Do not grieve, mademoiselle," he said in a low tone of voice, "I will avenge you." Eugenie understood and smiled.

Three days later Napoleon proposed to her, and an hour afterwards the news was all over Paris.

"I am marrying for love only," said Napoleon to his ministers; and when he made his next speech from the throne he remarked: "Endowed with all the qualities of the soul, she will be the ornament of the throne, and in the day of danger she will become one of its supports." Prophetic words when we remember subsequent events. The marriage took place on January 30, 1853, and then began a joint reign which for some years was simply "roses, roses all the way." Eugenie was

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

a beauty amongst empresses, and an empress amongst beauties. In 1856 a son, the Prince Imperial, was born. That crowned her happiness. The throne of France now seemed to be secured for the Napoleon family. There were, of course, political enemies, but the majority of the French people admired and respected her. She had all the qualities they liked. She was no ornamental beauty, but a strong-minded, determined woman, who knew her own mind, and who lived only for France.

Queen Victoria, that rigid upholder of royal dignity, met the empress shortly after her marriage. The great queen was somewhat prejudiced against the latest entrant into the charmed circle of royalty, but she straightway fell in love with the beauty, and all their lives they were close friends. Napoleon certainly lost nothing by his marriage. His wife made powerful friends for him wherever she went.

One country only she detested, and that was Prussia. She was so confident in the ability of the French to overthrow their foes that she threw herself with ardour into the opposition against German aggression, being quite ignorant of the lamentable condition of the French army. The Prussians, who had been steadily preparing for war, craftily lured their neighbours on, and Eugenie, the real power on the throne, accepted blindly the assurances of the French cabinet that the army was ready to strike at any moment.

Gradually the two nations drifted towards hostilities. Not a single Frenchman imagined that defeat was possible. When the declaration of war was made it was received with an approval that bordered on frenzy. Paris went mad for the time



## THE TRAGIC EMPRESS

---

being. Eugenie and her husband were idolised. "I wonder what name history will give this war," said a distinguished Frenchman to the empress. Instantly she flashed back the answer: "Let them call it my war." She was not the only one who predicted an easy victory.

We all know what happened. From the very beginning most neutrals realised that France would be beaten. Her soldiers were not ready to take the field, and bungling and incompetence did the rest. The Prussians began to pour into France, and in a last vain effort to stem the tide Napoleon appointed Eugenie to act as regent in his absence, rushed off to Sedan with his son, a boy of fourteen, and placed himself at the head of his army. Defeat and surrender ensued, and then a republic was proclaimed, and Eugenie, who feared French anarchists more than Prussian troopers, fled to England, where she knew she would find in Queen Victoria a staunch and sympathetic friend.

The days of her glory were now past. Sorrow and anxiety had robbed the once damask cheek of its bloom; she had aged suddenly, for to this proud, ambitious woman dethronement and exile were torture. A hope that France would send for her and her husband, or might be willing to give the throne to her son, animated her for a time. But in 1873 her husband died, and the fresh sorrow sent her into the depths again. Even in exile Napoleon had still proved fascinating to the opposite sex. He was constantly in the habit of receiving presents from unknown admirers. One girl sent him four hundred pounds anonymously. Presents of banknotes were common enough. These persons thought that because he had fled

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

from France he was necessarily very poor. The fact was that he was a millionaire.

It was very easy to hurt a proud woman, and Eugenie suffered much because of her pride. When Great Britain recognised the French Republic, and the news was conveyed to her, she fainted, but, of course, the act of recognition was only Great Britain's admission that every country has the right to select its own form of government. Eugenie tried to find relief in travelling about. France was closed to her for a time, and Germany she would not enter. Travel, however, was no solace to her. As the time slipped by she grew more and more depressed, and only because of her son did she strive to live.

The Prince Imperial was educated in England, and as he grew up to manhood gave promise of a splendid future. Everybody liked him. At the Military Academy at Woolwich he was the most popular cadet. He was, indeed, another Napoleon III, but stamped with his mother's rare qualities. No wonder she began to live again in him. She was no longer young. Her day was gone, and she had no desire to regain the crown, but now a new and equally fierce ambition seized her, and she wanted to see the Prince Imperial on the throne of France. Because of this she used some of her great fortune to further his cause.

The fighting spirit has always animated the Napoleon family, and when the empress gave her son a military education she ought to have foreseen the day when he would insist upon experiencing the rigours of a campaign. How proud she had been when her fourteen-year-old son received his baptism of fire in a minor skirmish with the Prussians! How she had glowed when the press

## THE TRAGIC EMPRESS

---

of the world printed his father's proud telegram announcing the fact! She little realised then that the prince was to meet his death fighting in the ranks of a foreign country.

When the Zulu War broke out in 1879 the Prince Imperial was twenty-three, and every inch a soldier. British troops began to leave England in January, and he was seized with an intense longing to go with them. He wrote to Queen Victoria asking for a commission, and his request was referred to his mother, who opposed it. For the first and only time Eugenie and her son had a difference. He could not bear the life of idleness he was living. He wanted to prove to the world that he was worthy of his great ancestor, Napoleon I. The ex-empress, terrified lest an accident should happen to the one man who, she considered, could save France, refused her consent, and when her son interviewed the Commander-in-Chief and the Prime Minister and everybody of influence he knew it was his mother's "No" that crushed his hopes.

But the more he was opposed the more resolute he became, and things came to such a pass that at last the empress had to give way on one point. It was agreed that the Prince Imperial was to watch the progress of the campaign as the guest of the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in the field, but he was not to take part in any fighting, and it was understood that his royal highness was not to be allowed near the danger zone.

The prince gleefully accepted these conditions, and immediately sailed for Cape Town, but, of course, it was quite impossible to simply "watch" such a series of operations as the war in Zululand entailed. We were fighting the most primitive of

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

savages, and we had to follow them into their lairs, risking ambushes, treachery, and disease.

Eugenie's son was not the kind of man to remain behind when the advance began, and he took the suggestion as an insult. In the circumstances all that could be done was to give him a bodyguard, but he resented even this measure of precaution, and the bodyguard had to be as unobtrusive as possible. Meanwhile with every day the British forces, the Prince Imperial with them, advanced further into the heart of Africa.

One morning in June a small body of trained men were ordered to go out as a scouting party to ascertain how far the enemy had retreated. It was not thought for a moment that any Zulus were in the neighbourhood, and when the young prince announced his intention of becoming one of the scouting party he was allowed to go, though there was an attempt to induce him to stay in the camp.

The party set off blissfully unaware that from the moment of leaving their base they were under the eyes of the Zulu scouts, who quickly carried the news to their main body. The crafty savages permitted the soldiers to get well beyond their comrades, and then in overwhelming numbers they fell upon them. The Prince Imperial took command, and with great skill he kept the enemy at bay, never once faltering, although he knew death was certain. Hordes of savages rolled against the puny "fort" the few soldiers made with the aid of their horses, and scores of Zulus were killed. At one time there was just a sporting chance that the intrepid adventurers would win, but numbers told in the end, and the Prince Imperial eventually fell pierced by assegais, dying the soldier's death he had coveted.

The sudden confirmation of her worst terrors

## THE TRAGIC EMPRESS

---

broke the heart of the ex-empress. She had refused her consent to the adventure because she had been haunted by a fear that the hope of her dynasty would be killed, and when the news was gently told her her first emotion was one of furious disbelief. But in time the unhappy woman bowed her head to this fresh blow. It nearly crushed her, and for years she seemed to live in a dream.

Bereft of her son she was quite helpless. Even republican France realised that she had ceased to be a danger, as she had no one for whom to fight now. The French nation, therefore, removed the restriction forbidding her access to her own country. There were other Napoleons, but none of them were seriously considered by the French. The ex-empress might select one to continue the work for the restoration of the family, but the republic did not deem them worthy of any special attention in the way of frustrating their efforts.

Great Britain tried to assuage the mother's grief by erecting a statue to the Prince Imperial, but even this well-meant effort led to a miserable squabble. It was the intention of the donors to erect the statue in Westminster Abbey, but a certain section of the public strongly objected, and after an unseemly wrangle it was placed in St. George's Chapel, Windsor. All this time the ex-empress was suffering acutely. In Queen Victoria and the Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward VII) she had two friends who never failed her. The prince risked the displeasure of extreme republicans by his courtesy to the fallen empress, but when the truth became known he was universally applauded for his chivalry.

The British Government proposed to the ex-empress that the body of the Prince Imperial

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

should be sent home in a warship. The offer, however, was declined, for her majesty had decided to go out to Africa herself and see the lonely grave where her son was lying. She wanted to have the melancholy honour of escorting his remains home to the beautiful mausoleum she gave orders to be prepared for him.

It was a sad journey, full of bitter memories. It was expected that the experience would prove too much for her, and she was advised not to undertake the voyage, but she insisted, and showed that the old indomitable will was still there, though when she came to the grave of stones in the African wilds she broke down.

The return of her son's body was the saddest pilgrimage of all, but the ex-empress appeared to derive some happiness from the fact that his grave was henceforth to be near her. In tending his magnificent tomb she found a little peace.

When time had effaced many of the animosities caused by the war of 1870 the ex-empress began to be seen in public, but she took no part in any festivities. She travelled about Europe, and her private yacht took her to many ports. The pathetic figure of the once great beauty excited universal sympathy, and with one exception she was treated by everybody with the respect due to her. The exception was the present ex-kaiser. He got the idea that it was his duty to become one of Eugenie's personal friends, and it mattered not to him that she loathed everything German. The persecution began in a Norwegian port, when the ex-empress was only informed in time that William II was on his way to pay her a visit to enable her to escape him. But for years he followed her

## THE TRAGIC EMPRESS

---

about, and at last he caught her. One night, or rather in the early hours of a summer morning, the ex-empress was sleeping on board her yacht when the officer on duty was startled by a series of ear-splitting siren screams from an approaching vessel. It proved to be the kaiser's yacht, and this was his noisy method of announcing his arrival. An hour or so later a German officer came to the ex-empress's yacht with the intimation that the kaiser would pay a visit of ceremony immediately after breakfast.

There was no escape for the empress now, and she had to consent to receive the ill-mannered Hun. A difficulty arose, however, owing to the fact that there was no German flag on board. Her captain solved the problem by borrowing a flag from the emperor's yacht, and so when the kaiser stepped on board the German flag that flew from the mast-head was really his own. He did not know this, and during the interview referred with gratitude to the kindness of the ex-empress in providing her yacht with a German flag!

When he had gone, having in his clumsy way managed to insult the old lady, she gave instructions that in future she would decline to see him, and she meant it, too. The great war, however, has spared her the embarrassment of having to snub the ex-kaiser.

Eugenie lived in complete retirement in her beautiful English home, save for occasional excursions abroad. During one of these she was observed in Paris wistfully surveying the scenes of her former glories. Hardly anyone recognised the ex-empress in the city where she had once been supreme. It was a pathetic commentary on the

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

frailty of human greatness. However, she outlived her rivals, her enemies and her friends, and even the German Empire, which her folly did so much to create, and when she died on July 11th, 1920, her mistakes had been forgotten.



## CHAPTER IV

### A DUTCH KING'S MARRIAGE

FOR many years Germany hovered over Holland like a hungry vulture waiting to devour its prey. Every Hun politician believed that one day the Dutch would come under the rule of their kaiser, and their leading statesmen always encouraged Dutch princes and princesses to wed Germans, so that Teutonic influence might prevail in the land of dykes. That was why about forty years ago a young German princess was married to the then King of Holland.

The second marriage of William III of Holland was quite unexpected, and arose out of a series of tragic events. He had had two sons by his first wife, but soon after reaching marriageable age both died, and, save for a brother who was a childless widower of sixty, there was no native-born heir to the throne. This fact caused great uneasiness to Bismarck, who knew that the succession would pass to a distant branch of the family, and that the latter—South Germans—would prove bitter enemies to him and to his plans. He determined, therefore, to provide Prince Henry, the childless widower, with another wife in the hope that he would have an heir. Bismarck succeeded in his design, and the Prince engaged himself to Princess Marie of Prussia, and the marriage was announced for an early date.

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

But Bismarck had reckoned without King William. That person had quarrelled with all his relations, who had ventured to criticise him for his treatment of his first wife. The king hated his brother, Henry, and when he met the girl the latter was going to marry and he saw that she was beautiful and charming, his jealousy became so fierce that he could not restrain his fiendish temper. He wanted to know why Prince Henry should marry again and not he. He shed angry tears when he realised that his brother's huge fortune would pass to his widow and their children, if they had any. He could not bear to think that his brother was going to be happy. In fact, the old king was like a bear with a sore head from the moment he was informed that his brother and heir was going to take unto himself a wife. However, he could not prevent the marriage, and when it took place at Potsdam he attended, though scarcely anyone approached him, and he was left pretty much to himself at the subsequent Palace festivities.

But the old king had been thinking how he could checkmate his brother's designs to see a child of his own on the throne, and he decided without consulting anyone to marry again himself. It did not matter whom he married. He was quite indifferent to her personality, whoever she was, for all he thought of was revenge, and he wished to spite the brother who had never given him real cause for offence.

King William suddenly announced that he must return at once to the Hague on important business. The news came as a welcome relief, and all the guests were delighted to see the back of him, especially Prince Henry's bride, though she, poor girl, could not rid herself of a feeling of terror

## A DUTCH KING'S MARRIAGE

when she reminded herself that presently she would have to live with her husband in the country where William III's word was law. However, she kept her spirits and enjoyed herself at Potsdam, and Prince Henry, guessing her feelings, postponed their departure as long as was possible.

The king, however, did not return to the Hague, for it was to Arolsen, in South Germany, that he went. Now, at Arolsen dwelt the reigning Prince of Waldeck and Pyrmont, who had three unmarried daughters, one of them being the Princess Emma, a girl of twenty, good-looking in an amiable way, and possessed of many charming qualities.

The Dutch king was not the man to waste time. He was old and crabby, and always in a hurry, and with almost brutal promptness he informed the girl's parents that if they were agreeable he would make Emma Queen of Holland. The proposal was instantly accepted by them on their daughter's behalf, and before the girl herself knew it she was engaged.

"It's a splendid match," said the prince, with enthusiasm. "You will be a queen, and you'll have limitless funds at your disposal. Every girl in Europe will envy you."

Carried away by the enthusiasm of her parents, Princess Emma agreed to obey them and marry the old king. Of course, she was not told how he had behaved to his first wife. She was unaware that on several occasions the king's ministers had had to intervene to prevent him assaulting his consort. A girl of twenty was not expected to hear the gossip of the Hague, and so she went to her doom in ignorance.

In August, 1878, Prince Henry had married, and so quickly did the king carry out his plans that

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

his marriage took place the following January. William was crazy with delight at the thought that he was forestalling his brother, but even when pleased with himself he could be spiteful, and when the ceremony was performed at Arolsen he would not permit any of his relations to be present. His own sister wrote asking for an invitation, and he sent her back an insulting reply written on a postcard. The wonder is that Princess Emma's parents, even if they were Germans, did not save their daughter at the last moment, for they knew what manner of man the bridegroom was. Perhaps they hoped that he would not live long, and that a year or two of misery would be fully compensated by his widow's inheritance of his many millions.

A dull and forbidding honeymoon was interrupted by the receipt of the news that Prince Henry, the bridegroom of four months, was dying. King William was so pleased to hear this that for quite two days he did not insult anyone, and when a message came announcing his brother's death he instantly left for the Castle, where the sad event had taken place. That visit was fraught with the direst consequences to his unfortunate sister-in-law, for a few hours before he had passed away Prince Henry had told his wife that he had made a will bequeathing her everything he possessed. He had grown to love his bride during their brief married life, and he only reconciled himself to death because he believed that at any rate he would leave her with more than sufficient money to make her independent of his brutal brother.

The king, however, had heard about that will, and although he already had more than he could possibly spend he resolved to steal his brother's millions, too. Of course, immediately

## A DUTCH KING'S MARRIAGE

following the death of the prince there was considerable confusion, and the widow, prostrated with grief, was unable to see anyone on business. This was the old scoundrel's chance, and he took it. The will disappeared whilst William was in the Castle, but the precise manner of the theft was never discovered. The fact remained, however, that although four persons had seen Prince Henry's will not a trace of it could be found from the day of the king's departure.

Now, as no will could be produced, the king was the heir to his brother's wealth, and accordingly several millions of money, half a dozen mansions, pictures of enormous value, and large tracts of valuable land passed into his possession. As he had been a millionaire six times over before this windfall everybody expected that he would behave handsomely to his brother's widow, not that they suspected him of generosity, but they felt certain that to prevent a scandal he would make her a more than adequate allowance.

They were grievously mistaken, however, for when, after a long delay, Queen Emma ventured to mention the subject, he raised his clenched fist so threateningly that she fled from him shrieking.

"Let the woman go back to her parents," he said, brutally, to a lawyer who obtained an interview with him. "It's their business to keep her. Not a penny of mine shall she have."

"But, your Majesty," said the widowed princess's legal representative, "her royal highness's family don't want her. She wishes to remain in Holland as she is now a Dutch princess. She does not ask for much—only the Castle of Soesdyk and sufficient money to maintain it."

"Go back to the German woman and tell her,"

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

shouted the king, "that the Castle of Soesdyk is mine now, and that unless she is out of it within a week I will have her forcibly removed. Tell her also that I will not give her a penny."

The poor princess, therefore, was compelled to live as best she could in a small house, as her own income was utterly inadequate. Queen Emma, a generous and lovable woman, helped her in secret, but by now she was battling with her own troubles, and the brutalities of her husband were ageing her before her time.

But if she knew only curses and ill-treatment from her husband she quickly gained the affections of the people. They liked her from the start, and when to their intense joy and relief she gave birth to a daughter—the present Queen of Holland—they knelt in the streets and thanked her as she drove past. This was no ordinary case of loyalty. Queen Emma, by giving birth to a child, had saved the Dutch from the ghastly menace of a German king. The Dutch naturally hated the bullies and tyrants who were their neighbours. They were aware that their land was honeycombed with German spies, and that Prussia ever hoped one day to be able to take possession of their prosperous country. That was why Queen Emma found herself the most popular person in her husband's dominions.

In the circumstances one would have expected King William to be pleased. He knew that he was detested, and here was a chance for him to gain a little popularity for himself by sharing in his wife's. But the contrary was the case, and when one day, soon after the birth of their daughter, the king and queen were driving through the streets of the Hague and all the people cried "God save the

## A DUTCH KING'S MARRIAGE

Queen!" his jealous fury became so great that it seemed at any moment that he might strike her across the face in public. Muttered oaths hurled at his wife and the coachman indiscriminately caused the royal carriage to be driven home at a breakneck pace, and flinging himself out of it he entered the palace, his wife following, trembling and terror-stricken. For the next five minutes she had to listen to his abuse.

"I have a way of keeping you in your place," he cried, gloating over her misery. "Displease me and I'll send you back to Arolsen and you'll never see your child again."

She knew that he had the power to do this, and because she loved the mite of humanity to which she had given birth she meekly submitted. It was not, of course, her fault that the Dutch people cheered her until they were hoarse, and ignored her husband. Neither could she prevent the newspapers emphasising the fact that one of their rulers was a human being.

Unfortunately for the unhappy queen there was no one to protect her. She did not appeal to her relatives because she feared that they might make it a pretext to interfere in Dutch politics, and she always kept the interests of Holland first and foremost in her mind. The king's ministers and officials were too terrified of him to show any courage in his presence, and accordingly the miserable queen passed her time in grief-stricken loneliness and with terror in her heart.

This sort of thing was perfect torture to a girl who was naturally bright and generous. She longed to be able to help the needy and the distressed, and, of course, numerous appeals were made to her, but only those in the inner circles of

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

the court knew that so far from being able to distribute charity the queen was very often compelled to forgo necessities both for herself and her baby.

Once she received a fairly large sum of money from an unexpected source. Some land which had been bequeathed to her by an aunt became valuable, and having been sold the proceeds were sent to the queen. About this time she heard indirectly that the Princess Marie, the widow of her husband's brother, Henry, was in very straitened circumstances, and she ventured to send her five hundred pounds. It was a risky proceeding, for she ought to have known that kings, however contemptible and inhuman they may be, never lack for creatures to act as their spies, and King William was told of the generous action, and instantly rushed into his wife's presence in a passion.

"That money ought to have been sent to me," he cried, working himself up into a maniacal fury. "I must have it all now. Go to that woman and insist upon the return of the sum you have given her." Queen Emma, terrified as she was, ventured to suggest that he was not serious. How could she ask for the return of the money in the circumstances?

"Very well, then," said King William, the yellow face wrinkled and the bleary eyes lurid with passion, "until I have the money you will not be permitted to see your child, and if within a week from to-day you are still obstinate, back home you go to your pauper parents, and I'll take care to see that you never set foot again in my dominions."

It was an effective threat, and Queen Emma submitted. She made the humiliating journey to the home of the Princess Marie, and in shame and



## A DUTCH KING'S MARRIAGE

humiliation requested the return of the five hundred pounds. The princess asked no questions. She knew something of the life Queen Emma led, and she could guess who was responsible for the disgraceful proceedings.

"I do not blame you, my dear," she said, kissing her. "I think I understand. Here is your draft. I am glad I had not time to spend it. Good-bye and God bless you for your kindness. Perhaps some day we may be able to see one another in happier circumstances."

That was the last time they met during the lifetime of the king. From henceforth William III would not allow the name of the girl he had robbed to be mentioned in his presence. To invite her anywhere was regarded as an offence by his majesty, and the result was that she was compelled to lead a very lonely life.

The last year of King William's life was 1890. He lived longer than his own doctors had expected, no doubt to spite his wife and the millions who hated and loathed him. It was a memorable year for all concerned. King William was particularly brutal and callous, and, as if realising that he was not destined to have many more opportunities, he took pains to make his wife's life more impossible than it ever had been.

Their child was now ten years old, sensible enough to understand that there was something wrong with her parents, and wise enough to guess that the best way to avoid trouble was to keep out of her father's way. She was terrified at the sight of him, for his evil face was bloated and his expression was cruel and menacing. But she did not know that for her sake and to protect her, the

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

queen, her mother, had often stood between her and ill-treatment.

"I shall live to select a husband for her," said King William, who liked to discuss the subject because it upset the queen. "She shall wed a man like myself—strong, wise, thrifty, and far-seeing, She shall be taught to obey him like you have obeyed me. I'll have no sentimental nonsense, Emma."

Would he live long enough to carry out his evil threat? The weary, heartbroken queen prayed for her daughter's happiness and the prosperity of her adopted country.

There is no need to recall in detail the events of that last year. How Queen Emma survived it, it is difficult to understand. To the end her husband vilified and ill-treated her, and becoming careless with the approach of death he quarrelled with the queen in the presence of Ministers of State and the representatives of foreign Powers. Holland learnt more about the character of the king than it had ever known before, and when on November 23, 1890, his death was announced every decent person's first thought was one of congratulation to the widow. Her purgatory had come to an end at last.

With the death of the king his daughter, Wilhelmina, became queen, but as she was only ten her mother was appointed queen-regent. The latter assumed control at once and ordered elaborate mourning for her husband. She was too proud to admit that her marriage had been a failure, and she made a great pretence of distress in public. Every day for weeks she went to the king's tomb and prayed over his coffin. The Dutch looked on puzzled until a wit declared that the queen-regent

## A DUTCH KING'S MARRIAGE

---

only went daily to her husband's tomb to make certain that he was really dead. After that there was no more wonderment, and her majesty was left to her own devices. Probably her people understood and sympathised. After all, even a queen has the right to deceive herself.

But all the same she was another woman when she found herself freed from her husband. One of her first acts was to restore to Princess Marie a considerable portion of Prince Henry's wealth, and having repaired that wrong she settled down to make her daughter worthy of her high destiny. She was queen-regent until 1898, and since her child's accession to full powers she has naturally led a more retired life, but she still retains the affections of the Dutch, who have not forgotten how much she suffered during her eleven years of matrimony.

## CHAPTER V

### THE EMPEROR WHO CHANGED HIS MIND

ONE morning a little over sixty years ago Duke Maximilian and his wife were excited and elated by the receipt of a letter from the Archduchess Sophie of Austria to the effect that her son, the emperor, had looked with favour upon their elder daughter, Helen. She advised the proud parents to make the most of that impression by bringing her to Ischl at once, where his majesty had a palace and where emperor and princess could get to know one another better.

When Princess Helen was informed of her good luck she was no less pleased. Was it not something to be proud of that she should be about to make the greatest and most desirable match in Europe? She was going to be an empress, the partner of a man with countless millions at his disposal and the owner of some of the loveliest palaces in the world. Helen had always been an ambitious girl, and now her wildest dreams seemed about to be fulfilled.

She ran at once to tell her younger sister, Elizabeth, the splendid news, and the latter, excited and pleased, too, for she was warm-hearted and generous, instantly begged to be allowed to make the journey to Ischl with her parents and her sister.

"I will be your companion, Helen," she pleaded

## EMPEROR WHO CHANGED HIS MIND

coaxingly when some objection was raised. "You'll want someone to chat to and confide in. We've never been separated yet. Don't let us be parted until your husband takes you away to Vienna."

Elizabeth was a lovely girl, with a superb, oval face tinged with the colour of a peach. The mouth, too, was perfection. The eyes were deep and star-like, for at seventeen the Princess Elizabeth gave that promise of rare beauty to which she afterwards attained. Helen, too, was lovely, but not in the same way, and Elizabeth was only kept in the background by reason of her extreme youth. Her parents knew that when her turn came there would be no lack of suitors, and they were in no hurry to force her upon the matrimonial market.

The journey to Ischl was accomplished, and immediately a round of festivities began which kept the royal party busy from morning till night. Helen was, of course, the chief attraction, and the large retinue of noblemen and gentlemen in attendance on the emperor treated her with all that respect due to one who was shortly to be the wife of their monarch. Princess Elizabeth, too, enjoyed herself with all the thoroughness of a young girl bent on pleasure. At a critical moment she was fortunate in finding the young emperor taking her side when her mother wished to prevent her attending all the dances on the plea that she was too young to dance into the early hours of every morning. Francis Joseph, young, handsome, and a master of the art of attracting women, intervened on Elizabeth's behalf, and she was never absent from any of the entertainments. Naturally she thanked him prettily.

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

"You are the first real friend I've had, cousin," she said with a laugh and a curtsy, "and I am deeply grateful to my champion."

The festivities continued for a fortnight, at the end of which the Austrian minister in attendance on the emperor was to have issued the official announcement of the royal engagement. But a day before the fortnight ended something very important happened.

Francis Joseph had been very kind and attentive to the Princess Helen, who, sobered by her sudden importance, was always calm and collected. Elizabeth, on the other hand, had no responsibilities, and she was ever a fresh, gay, mirthful, unaffectedly happy girl. The emperor, greatly to his own surprise, found himself at a loss when Elizabeth was away from his side. On this particular day he missed her especially, and when he went in search of her he found her in one of the smaller rooms in the palace idly turning the leaves of a volume containing illustrations of the different races the Emperor of Austria ruled.

"Let me show you the pictures," he said spontaneously, and presently he was explaining the principal characteristics of the motley group of nationalities which formed the Austrian Empire. When he came to the last page he turned his face towards her, and took her right hand in his.

"Elizabeth," he said in a low tone, "you have seen my subjects. How would you like them to be yours also?"

That was how the Emperor Francis Joseph proposed. A few minutes later he went to the duke and informed him, and before dinner that night the Princess Helen heard that she had lost the great prize. She bore her disappointment bravely, and

## EMPEROR WHO CHANGED HIS MIND

did not reproach her sister. As for Elizabeth she was radiantly happy.

"I am to be an empress," she cried exultingly. "What a joy!" Poor girl! How could she know that from the day she became the wife of Francis Joseph of Austria her life was to be spent amongst secret and avowed enemies?

The wedding took place amid great pomp, Francis Joseph proud and happy, Elizabeth conquering all hearts with her beauty and graciousness, and if ever a marriage began with every prospect of happiness this was one. The emperor was fascinated by his bride. Her loveliness enthralled him. She was witty, too, and her pride was tempered with wisdom. There was nothing stiff or starchy about her, yet he knew that she would never forget the dignity of her position.

"You have made me the happiest man in Europe," were his own words to her a few hours after they had become man and wife.

They went for a triumphant honeymoon, and then returned to Vienna, where in the great palace Elizabeth revelled with almost childlike delight in the splendours of her home. She was the sort of girl who can only be happy in a palace. Luxury and position were necessities to her, and she fondly believed that she had all her husband's love.

The bitter awakening came exactly five weeks after the marriage. Elizabeth, wandering about the huge palace known as the Hofburg, came to a door leading to a suite of apartments. It was locked, and with the curiosity of a girl she ordered it to be opened. A lady-in-waiting tried to distract her attention, but failed. The empress's curiosity became greater, and when she repeated her demands an officer of the household politely

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

informed her that she could not be obeyed. Of course, after this Elizabeth would listen to no excuses, and eventually her mother-in-law, the Archduchess Sophie, had to intervene. She went back with Elizabeth to her part of the palace, and after sternly forbidding her to attempt again overruling her husband's orders she left her.

The Archduchess Sophie had never liked Elizabeth. She was intensely jealous of her. The beauty of the empress and her charming personal qualities had won her the affection and respect of all classes in Vienna. Formerly when the Archduchess Sophie drove out the people had cheered her. Now they cheered the empress, and the mother-in-law did not like that. She secretly resolved to kill her daughter-in-law's popularity if she could.

Elizabeth, however, was not to be bullied, and she made her inquiries through a different channel. Then she discovered that the locked suite was the resort of the emperor and his cronies, the riff-raff of Vienna, in their wild night orgies. As Elizabeth said to a friend nearly thirty years later: "Something snapped within me when I knew that my husband was not all that I thought he was, and I have never been the same since."

She complained to her mother-in-law, only to be answered with jeers and threats. Francis Joseph was appealed to, and sought refuge in weak denials, and weaker promises. The young empress could obtain no redress. Francis Joseph went off whenever he pleased, leaving his mother to act as wardress over his wife, and the broken-hearted girl passed her days in solitude and boredom. She was unhappy, dispirited, and discontented. Imperial etiquette bound her with chains. She was



## EMPEROR WHO CHANGED HIS MIND

not free like any ordinary person, and she could not leave her husband, no matter how badly he treated her. Now and then she tried to bring a little change into the monotony of court life. One day, for example, when she sat down to the usual luxurious lunch, she pushed her plate from her.

"I'm tired of all this," she cried, petulantly. "Bring me a glass of lager beer and some sausages and mashed potatoes."

Great was the consternation of the court. Her Imperial Majesty demanding "sausages and mash," the food of common people! And lager beer, too! She must be mad. But Elizabeth insisted, and she had to be obeyed. So whilst her mother-in-law, half-a-dozen archdukes and arch-duchesses, and a score of officers attached to the household ate the choice dishes prepared by the royal chef, Elizabeth, Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary, enjoyed sausages and mashed potatoes, washed down by Munich beer.

But the famous meal was not allowed to be forgotten. The enraged mother-in-law saw to that. She told the story to her son when that young man returned from one of his secret orgies, and Francis Joseph, who never had a sense of humour, was furious at what he called an insult to the whole house of Hapsburg. He went to his wife at once and upbraided her, but she merely laughed at him, because she could realise even with a broken heart the humour of an unfaithful husband solemnly reproving his wife for the terrible offence of eating "sausages and mash."

"Your conduct in general doesn't please me," said Francis Joseph in a shrill voice. "My mother tells me also that you insist upon wearing the same pair of shoes more than once. Now you know that

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

the imperial etiquette prescribes that my wife must throw away her shoes after she has worn them once."

"Bother imperial etiquette," said the girl with a pout. "When I get a comfortable pair of shoes I like to wear them out."

"Then you are often seen shopping on foot, Elizabeth, attended by only one lady-in-waiting," said her husband, continuing the catalogue of horrors, "and my mother says that you ignore the rules of our house when they don't suit your convenience. Now I won't——"

"I only wish, Francis," said the empress with tears in her eyes, "that all your offences were against an out-of-date etiquette. But it's no use arguing. You have destroyed my happiness. I hope your mother is proud of your conduct. I thought that being a wife herself she would try to help me instead of encouraging you in your wickedness."

There were many similar scenes, for the Archduchess Sophie took a keen delight in spying upon her daughter-in-law and egging on Francis Joseph to quarrelling with her. Then the empress had her first child, a son. For a year there was calm on the surface. But just when the unhappy woman was anticipating a little consolation from the companionship of her child the emperor and his mother announced that he must be brought up under their auspices. This meant that Elizabeth would see practically nothing of the boy.

"Very well," she said, realising her helplessness, "take him and bring him up after your own fashion, but God help him, for I can foresee the sort of man you will make him." Prophetic words

## EMPEROR WHO CHANGED HIS MIND

when we remember what happened at Meyerling in 1888.

It was not until two years after the birth of the Crown Prince Rudolph that the first open breach occurred between the emperor and the empress. By some extraordinary means she had managed to live under the same roof with him, and, woman-like, she was ever hoping for the best. The worst, however, always happened.

There was in those days a third-rate Viennese actress of the name of Roll, of whom Francis Joseph became enamoured. Elizabeth did not hear of it until all Vienna was discussing the affair. When it did come to her ears it took such a humiliating and insulting form that, overcome by anger, she instantly quitted the city and made for Madeira, with the intention of never returning to Austria again. News of her departure quickly reached the emperor, who, terrified lest a public scandal should ensue, and his own misdeeds be brought to light, despatched an emissary after the fleeing empress. This person was commissioned to offer her her own terms provided she returned at once, and he was clever enough to work upon her majesty's feelings to such an extent that she gave in, and once more the farce of "reconciliation and forgiveness" was gone through. The flight, however, had one very important result. It revealed to its fullest extent the fact that the empress had a hold over the man she had married. She could from henceforth enjoy some freedom, for if he protested or tried to play the rôle of tyrant she had only to threaten to give her story to the world to send him from her presence with his "tail between his legs."

But it was not to even a semblance of happiness

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

that Elizabeth returned. It was too late now. The years were passing dully and slowly for her. There was no one at the court in whom she could confide, and whenever she travelled abroad her acquaintances, realising that she was dogged by her husband's spies and afraid lest they should risk his displeasure if they consorted too openly with her, kept at a distance, and left the lonely lady to herself.

Once an elderly court physician, struck by the pathos of her majesty's position, ventured to suggest to the emperor that if Elizabeth saw something of her children she might awaken out of the melancholy trance into which she had fallen. At first Francis Joseph angrily declined to vary the rigid rules that govern Austria's imperial family. It was the custom for the empress to give twenty-four hours' notice to the chamberlain whenever she wished to see her own children, and unless such notice was tendered she was not permitted to enter the royal nursery. This may seem incredible, but it is a fact. And when the visit took place it was not a case of happy little children welcoming their mother with cries of delight. What actually happened was quite different. First the royal governesses had the children dressed in stiff, ceremonial clothes, and then drilled in the way they were to receive their mother. On the appearance of the empress, therefore, the tiny tots, who, under the Austrian system of education, had no chance to be human; simply bowed as though they were elderly courtiers, the only sign of childhood being the terrified stares at the august lady.

No wonder Elizabeth refused to take part in the absurd ceremony more often than was absolutely necessary. It sickened her to think that she could

## EMPEROR WHO CHANGED HIS MIND

not fondle her own babies, and that practically from the day of their birth they were strangers to her.

However, Dr. Oberhofer, rendered courageous by old age, for he was too old to care about rewards or punishments, persevered in his advice, and eventually Francis Joseph gave way, but he stipulated that besides the daring physician only one of the royal governesses should know of this terrible outrage against the etiquette of the Hapsburgs. It was, indeed, a daring innovation—an Austrian empress receiving her own child as any ordinary woman might.

By now the Crown Prince Rudolph was seven, but he had seen so little of his mother that she was practically a stranger to him. Still when Elizabeth was informed of Dr. Oberhofer's success she instantly asked that Rudolph should be brought to her.

With a fluttering heart she awaited his arrival in the enormous room which was called her boudoir. It seemed too good to be true that she was to have her only son all to herself for a few hours. For seven years she had seen very little of him, and her mother-in-law, the Archduchess Sophie, had apparently erected an impassable barrier between them, but now——

The door opened, and the boy entered, and she saw a small face stained with tears and a pair of eyes sullen and defiant.

The empress held out her arms.

"Come to me, Nazi," she said, using the pet name she had bestowed upon him. The child stood as if afraid to move, and his mother went up to him to take him in her arms. But when she touched

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

him he gave a loud scream and drew away from her.

"Don't like you," he said, with the terrible candour of childhood. "You are a wicked woman. Grandmamma says you are."

For a moment or two the sudden pain caused Elizabeth to press a hand against her heart. In a flash she realised that her own son was being brought up to hate her. The tears filled her eyes.

"You have been told lies, Nazi," she said wistfully, but she did not attempt to touch him again. "You are too young to understand, but one of these days you will be in trouble, and then you will come to me. I am sorry for you. It is a terrible thing to be trained to hate your own mother. Even a future emperor needs his mother's love."

"Don't love you," persisted the child, defiant to the last. "I want to go back to grandmamma. She's not a wicked woman." He turned and tugged at the handle of the door. Someone opened it from without, and that someone was the kindly doctor.

"Take him away, doctor," said Elizabeth, speaking with an effort. "The child has been told to insult me, and he hasn't failed to carry out his instructions."

Dr. Oberhofer's look of concern deeply touched her majesty.

"I am sorry," he said with a bow. "Perhaps if the Archduchess Sophie could be present His Imperial Highness would——"

"Leave me," said the empress, and the good doctor fled with the young prince.

From the day Elizabeth had discovered the real character of her husband there had been two parties at court. Naturally the larger sided with the

## EMPEROR WHO CHANGED HIS MIND

emperor. He had all the power, and he could advance or degrade as he pleased. Those who went to court to seek places and profit toadied to Francis Joseph, and as Vienna society is corrupt from top to bottom the empress had very few genuine friends. Francis Joseph sent an arch-duchess now and then to his wife, whose business it was to pretend to sympathise with the unhappy woman, but whose real mission was to spy upon her and report everything she said and did to her employer. One of these hirelings informed the emperor that in her opinion Elizabeth was mad, and Francis Joseph instantly thought he saw in this statement a way out of all his troubles. He set about his task in characteristic fashion.

Amongst the numerous residences belonging to him was a shooting-box in a remote corner of Hungary, to which Elizabeth had become attached in the first year of her married life, and the emperor suggested in his best sentimental manner that they should spend a few days there "alone with nature," and with only a few attendants. Elizabeth fell in with his suggestion, and they went to the shooting-box, and two nights later Francis Joseph gave a small dinner-party, to which he had invited, as he explained to Elizabeth, four Hungarian magnates. The dinner was to be purely a formal one, and the empress offered no objection to the presence of the guests, but an hour before she was to descend to the saloon she overheard one royal servant ask another why it was that the emperor and empress were going to entertain four doctors, two of whom kept private asylums.

The discovery transfixed her majesty. She and the emperor were to dine with four doctors whom

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

he had falsely described. What did it mean? Was it a conspiracy against her?

If it had not been for the deliberate lie Francis Joseph had told her about their guests, Elizabeth would undoubtedly have walked straight into the trap set for her, but as it was she saw through the conspiracy at once. Her husband had sent for four eminent Austrian doctors, two of them being specialists in brain troubles, and, posing as Hungarian magnates, they were to gradually draw the empress out so that in an unguarded moment she might give vent to extravagant expressions upon which they could found a charge of lunacy against her.

It was a plot characteristic of her scoundrelly husband. This method of getting rid of a wife who was not wanted was an old Austrian trick. Francis Joseph, knowing that Elizabeth might break silence and expose him to the world for what he really was, wished to lock her up in an asylum for the rest of her life.

Had she been a less important person he would not have troubled to call in the doctors, for he could have simply ordered her detention in an asylum miles from anywhere, and the rest would be silence and oblivion. However, the Empress Elizabeth had powerful friends besides the natural curiosity of the public concerning her and her doings. She would be missed if not seen in her usual haunts, and Francis Joseph had, therefore, hired these jackals to certify his wife to be a lunatic. Once in possession of their certificate he could face criticism boldly.

For nearly an hour Elizabeth stood alone in her boudoir thinking over the situation. Was there any way of escape? She knew that all the servants



## EMPEROR WHO CHANGED HIS MIND

were creatures of her husband's, and that not one of them would take her part against his. She was, in fact, surrounded by enemies, a helpless woman hopelessly outnumbered by those who wished her evil.

What was to be done? How often she asked herself that question and shook her head in despair! But just as it seemed that she must surrender to the forces arrayed against her she remembered how on the occasion of her first visit to the hunting-box—she had been a happy bride then—she had met a tall, handsome, powerful young Hungarian nobleman of the name of Alonyi. She had been struck by his chivalry, and now in the hour of her difficulty she thought of him.

She had only a few minutes in which to pen a brief letter to him, and when that was accomplished she left the apartment and went in search of a maid. She found one at last, a young and ignorant girl, who knew nothing of the peculiar relations existing between the emperor and the empress. Elizabeth, having promised a heavy bribe, told the girl to take the letter and deliver it at the castle belonging to Count Alonyi, and, having seen the girl start on her errand, she proceeded downstairs to the dining-room.

The four doctors, in their somewhat shabby dress suits, were introduced to her by high-sounding Hungarian names. Elizabeth kept a passive countenance and treated them politely. They were, of course, very deferential, but gradually and insinuatingly they led her on to talk of her hopes and aspirations. Elizabeth, who had the temperament of a poetess, spoke eloquently of her love of nature and of freedom, and entering into the fun of the thing she purposely made many absurd state-

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

ments. Confident that Count Alonyi would not fail her, the empress's eyes twinkled whenever she caught a significant glance pass between the emperor and his confederates.

The dinner was nearing its end when a commotion was heard in the hall. Elizabeth sprang to her feet, and the others followed her example. The next moment a tall, muscular Hungarian was in the room. Count Alonyi had come to the rescue of his empress.

"What is the reason for this outrage, sir?" Francis Joseph cried, in a weak passion.

Count Alonyi bowed low.

"I am here at the orders of Her Majesty the Empress," he said, respectfully. "She sent for me."

Francis Joseph turned to his wife, but before he could speak again she advanced to the count's side.

"Here is the only friend I have got," she cried, in ringing tones. "Count, I want you to protect me from these men." She pointed to the highly-embarrassed doctors. "They are here with the intention of swearing falsely against me. My husband wishes them to certify that I am mad. They will take me away to an asylum unless I have someone to save me from them."

The conspirators' faces turned yellow.

"Your Majesty can rely upon the Hungarians," the count said, but there was something in his tone which frightened the specialists. "We will not permit anyone to insult you, least of all on Hungarian soil. I and my tenants are at your Majesty's commands."

Elizabeth glanced fearlessly at her husband.

"I think you might see these—these persons off the premises," she said to Alonyi; "I do not think

## EMPEROR WHO CHANGED HIS MIND

they would be happy if they remained here any longer."

That night four crestfallen if eminent specialists caught the next train back to Vienna, and left their employer to arrange matters with his indignant wife.

Francis Joseph did not do much talking during the ensuing scene with his wife, but in the end he promised that never again would he think of attempting to consign her to the living death of a lunatic asylum. Not content with this, Elizabeth extracted from him, in writing, an undertaking that Count Alonyi would not be molested because he had saved her from a terrible fate.

For Elizabeth knew well the fate of any subject who incurred the hatred of the emperor. She was aware that if she had left Count Alonyi without any guarantees as to his safety he would have been arrested on a trumped-up charge, consigned to a foul dungeon reeking with damp and overrun by rats, and left to rot there without being brought to trial. She had known several cases where this torture had been applied until death had ensued, and so she took precautions.

But, of course, she saw less of her husband than ever after that. Now and then she would stand by his side at a reception to a foreign monarch and his wife, but for the greater part of the year Elizabeth avoided his society. Even when residing in the Hofburg she would not meet Francis Joseph for weeks although he was living in the same palace.

On one occasion the present ex-German emperor—then known as Prince William of Prussia—paid a visit to Vienna, and because he was young—only eighteen—Elizabeth consented to receive him and act as his hostess. She had never liked the Hohen-

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

zollerns, but she had been told that Prince William was a model young man, devoted to his studies, and determined to be a wise and successful ruler when his turn came to mount the throne of Prussia.

She was quickly disillusioned, however, and within twenty-four hours she had found out for herself that Prince William was a vicious brute with a fondness for bullying all those beneath him in rank. He was, indeed, a most unpleasant person, with unhealthy views, and after that she was not surprised that he preferred to associate with the men who were the emperor's nightly companions.

As Elizabeth could not leave Vienna until their visitor had departed, she was naturally anxious for him to clear out as quickly as possible. She had no interest in him now. He was just like the other men, vicious and depraved, and she was only too willing to see the last of him. But on the day fixed for Prince William's journey back to Berlin, Elizabeth heard to her horror that he was going to take the Crown Prince Rudolph with him. The two young men were to have a few weeks on their own. Now, the empress, even if she had been separated from her only son, was still his mother, and she protested vigorously against Rudolph being "taken in hand" and "shown the world," as Francis Joseph cynically put it. She knew the sort of "world" Prince William lived in, for at eighteen the man who is now the ex-German Emperor was as bad a degenerate as can be imagined.

"Nonsense," said the Emperor, in answer to her protests. "One of these days Rudolph and William will be neighbouring monarchs. They will between them govern the German people, and I want them to be friends. If they see a lot of one

## EMPEROR WHO CHANGED HIS MIND

another it will be for the good of both countries. Besides, Rudolph is no saint."

"He couldn't be after the training you have given him," the empress retorted, "but there are wells of iniquity of which Rudolph knows nothing, and I will not have him flung into them by such a person as Prince William."

"I have given Rudolph permission to go," said Francis Joseph, coldly, "and he is anxious to make the journey. After all, Berlin is no worse than Vienna. You are needlessly alarmed."

"Poor Nazi," said Elizabeth, with tears in her voice. "Poor boy! I think I can see the fate in store for him."

It is difficult for the English mind to understand the Austrian, as the following account of another attempt to induce the world to believe that the empress was mad will show. It will be remembered that Elizabeth's first cousin, King Ludwig of Bavaria, went mad, and that in his case insanity took the form of a craze for erecting huge and costly palaces. When Elizabeth decided to build a villa at Corfu the Vienna court partly smiled significantly and said that she was as mad as Ludwig. However, they were disappointed on being informed that the cost of the villa was not to exceed £750,000—about a tenth of what Ludwig of Bavaria was accustomed to spend on one of his palatial residences.

The architects set to work, and the empress having approved of the plans, building operations were begun. Meanwhile Elizabeth travelled about, and was not bothered with details of her new home. She intended to occupy it when it was completed, but she had no intention of seeing it before then.

In due course she was informed that it was ready

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

for her occupation, and one afternoon she arrived at Corfu and drove to the "villa." To her amazement she found a magnificent palace, one of the most wonderful she had ever seen. The architects had spared no expense. The "villa" was, indeed, a fairyland, and the gardens were a dream.

"All this for three-quarters of a million pounds!" she exclaimed, in wonderment.

Her chamberlain smiled.

"Your Majesty is mistaken," he said, gravely. "The cost of the villa exceeds three and a half millions."

Of course, it was too late to do anything now, and Elizabeth was too proud to quarrel about the matter, but within a week the courts of Europe were supplied by Francis Joseph's agents with accounts of Elizabeth's "madness." Her relationship to the mad King of Bavaria was emphasised, and it was "proved" that she, too, was insane like her cousin, and that by a strange coincidence her insanity took the same form—a mania for building palaces!

Now, the truth was that Francis Joseph had given orders for the original estimates for the "villa" to be altered so that a charge of insane extravagance could be brought against his wife.

It is interesting to note that this palace at Corfu was eventually purchased by the ex-German Emperor as a summer residence, and that during the late war it was captured by the Allies, who used it as a hospital. When Wilhelm II heard of the capture of the "villa" it is said that he nearly had a fit, so great was his rage.

But, ignoring scandal, innuendo, and the plots of her husband against her reputation and her liberty,

## EMPEROR WHO CHANGED HIS MIND

Elizabeth made of herself "an island," as she put it.

"There is no one who really loves me," she said, many times. "I am quite alone. A woman with a score of palaces but not a single home."

And yet she would not sanction any reprisals. There were some who came to her with offers of help, but as all of their schemes involved plots against Francis Joseph the empress would not hear of them.

"I married him in the sight of God and of men," she said, calmly. "He has wronged me, but I will not wrong him."

For the space of five years she seldom saw her son. Once Rudolph came to her imploring her help, but it was too late.

"I can do nothing, Nazi," she said, tenderly. "You have been too long under your father's influence. I am quite helpless. Try and be happy, dear. You are still young." He went from her with an oath, unable to understand why she refused to avenge herself on his father.

Then came the tragedy of Meyerling, when Rudolph was found dead beside the corpse of Mary Vetsera. It was the inevitable end to a life of dissipation, intrigue, and disgrace. The empress made no public comment on it, but she must have remembered that when they had taken the child from her she had prophesied that the worst would happen.

Francis Joseph wept, and called upon the God he had outraged to comfort him, and after a hypocritical display in a crowded cathedral he secretly left Vienna to amuse himself in a distant hunting-box.

But by now Elizabeth had been driven to end

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

the pretence of living in peace with the arch-hypocrite, and she spent the rest of her life wandering from place to place. Italy, France, Germany, England, and Ireland were visited in turn. She was a superb horsewoman, and she was devoted to hunting. Those who knew her intimately declared that she was seeking a sudden death in the hunting field. She certainly took risks that terrified her attendants.

Once she went to see the Empress Eugenie, and the exiled monarch advised her to try a season at Cap Martin. Elizabeth followed her advice, and passed a brief period of rest, but she was quickly on her journeys again. She spent a short time in the Isle of Wight. Then she went on to Cromer. After that another visit to Ireland for the hunting. But nowhere could she find peace for her troubled soul.

One day she stared at herself in the mirror.

"Is it possible that I am growing old?" she asked herself, with a tremor in her voice. "Old before I can regain my happiness! I will not be old, for only the young are happy, and I want to be young again."

After that she avoided mirrors, and she was able to impose upon herself the belief that Time was standing still with her. She commissioned her portrait, and the artist, understanding sympathetically her state of mind, produced a portrait of Elizabeth as she had looked when a girl in her late teens. The empress was delighted. "It is just like me," she said, and carried the picture with her on her travels.

Sometimes when in residence at Cap Martin the Emperor Francis Joseph paid her a ceremonial visit. He was anxious to impress upon the outside



## EMPEROR WHO CHANGED HIS MIND

world that he was devoted to his wife, and that she only lived out of his country because the climate did not agree with her. Elizabeth occasionally received him, but on several occasions when the official announcement declared that "the emperor and empress had lunched together" the truth was that Francis Joseph took that meal alone because his wife refused to see him.

Whenever she was on French soil the detective appointed to guard her was the famous officer, Xavier Paoli. She gave him a lot of trouble, because she was addicted to exposing herself to unnecessary risks. When he remonstrated with her she answered sadly :

"Set your mind at rest. Nothing will happen to me. What would you have them do to more than the petal of a poppy or a ripple on the water."

When a friend spoke of death she showed no disinclination to discuss the subject.

"I should like to be buried near the sea," she said, pensively, "so that the waves might beat against my coffin. Then all the stars in Heaven would shine on me, and the cypresses would lament for me far longer than either men or women."

She uttered these words at the beginning of the year that was to witness her tragic death. It seemed as though she realised that the end was near, although the doctors had pronounced her free from disease. She was also more restless than usual, and she actually passed a short time in Vienna, where, however, she declined to receive anybody.

When she was staying at a hotel at Caux she was wont to sit on the balcony of an afternoon. On one occasion she summoned peremptorily the manager, who came to her in alarm.

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

"There's a woman dressed in white who does nothing but stare at me with threats in her eyes," she said, hurriedly. "There she is, in the garden below. Send her away at once."

The manager rushed downstairs to obey, but could find no sign of the person described. Every nook and corner of the garden was searched with the same result.

"Her Majesty must have imagined it," he said to his friends. "It is a sign of death," said one of them, and shrugged his shoulders.

Amongst Elizabeth's engagements for the year of 1898 was a visit to the Baroness Adolphe Rothschild, who had a villa at Pregny, near Geneva. She was due to arrive there on the 10th of September, and a few days previous to that date Paoli, the detective, was informed that there was danger to be feared if the empress made the journey to Pregny. Paoli instantly interviewed her majesty and plainly warned her, but she only smiled at his fears.

"No one will harm a poor woman," she said, wistfully. "Pray, calm yourself, my dear M. Paoli. I am all right, and nothing will induce me to postpone my visit."

The Frenchman could do nothing, and the journey was undertaken.

Paoli could only hope that he had been misinformed, but unfortunately he was not.

At 2 p.m. on September 10, Elizabeth was walking along the quay leading to the landing stage at Geneva, where the steamer was awaiting her, when an anarchist named Luccheni sprang at her like a tiger and drove a shoemaker's awl into her heart. The poor empress staggered but managed to keep her feet, and only when she reached the

## **EMPEROR WHO CHANGED HIS MIND**

---

steamer did she sit down. Then she asked, "What is it?" and the next moment was dead.

The murderer was sentenced to imprisonment for life, and Elizabeth was buried amid all that solemn pageantry which means nothing to the dead and very little to the living.

## CHAPTER VI

### A ROYAL ROGUE

It is nearly eleven years since the ex-kaiser, speaking of Ferdinand of Bulgaria, said, in the hearing of a score of members of his court, "That fellow is the biggest scoundrel in Europe, and is always bringing disgrace upon the order of kings. He ought to be in gaol, and I wish he were." This sounds rather odd when we remember that during the late war Ferdinand and William II were allies, though the ex-German Emperor always took very good care not to be seen in the society of his despised supporter and dupe.

For Ferdinand of Bulgaria is without doubt an unmitigated scoundrel. A false friend, a treacherous companion, a coward, and a bully, he actually glories in his weaknesses, and can talk complacently of the measures he adopts to save his own skin. He never took part in a battle because he hates the sight of blood, and yet he was responsible for at least five political assassinations long before the great European war. Even in exile he works in a bomb-proof study and wears a secret coat of the finest steel, for Ferdinand lives in daily dread of assassination, although when he was elected to rule Bulgaria he gave utterance to the famous saying, "If there's going to be assass-

## A ROYAL ROGUE

---

ination at Sofia, I intend to be on the side of the assassins."

King Ferdinand's fellow-rulers knew what a scoundrel he was, and when, after he had become a reigning prince he set out on a tour to find a suitable wife, he found most of the royal houses closed against him.

Queen Victoria was indignant at the bare idea that the beer-drinking, evil-living, half-savage princeling should even dare to think of marrying into her family, and she curtly dismissed him without as much as referring to the object of his pilgrimage. The fellow went to Berlin to get the cold shoulder there. The Czar of Russia, who had made Bulgaria independent of the uncivilised Turk, was kinder, but he drew the line at handing over a relative of his own to the tender mercies of the man with the wicked and cruel face. So from court to court Ferdinand journeyed, his only hope being that his vast wealth might attract some girl whose imagination would succumb to the prospect of sharing a throne with him. In those days Ferdinand was merely a prince, but, of course, he intended to declare himself king at the first opportunity, and we know that eventually he carried out his intention.

At last he came across a princess who seemed to find something of interest in him. She was the Princess Marie Louise of Parma, a gentle, timid, and very religious girl, who was taken in completely by Ferdinand's hypocrisy. Perhaps, too, she admired him because he was so tall. She herself was on the small and insignificant side, but she had a sweet, amiable temper, and was all for peace and quiet.

She knew that Ferdinand would like to marry

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

her because she was connected with most of the reigning families in Europe, and when he discovered that she lived only for religion, he with characteristic craft began to talk to her on religious subjects, as though he had never broken a single Commandment. And Ferdinand of Bulgaria has broken most of them. That is a commonplace of history.

The little princess with the delicate colouring and the soft grey eyes was captivated, or, rather, hypnotised by crafty Ferdinand, and when he spoke, with tears in his voice, of his self-appointed mission to reclaim the Bulgarians and to save them from the vicious influences to which they had been subjected so long under the Turks, the princess became enthusiastic. She wanted to be his partner in this noble work of reclamation, and she told him so.

Ferdinand afterwards related, with many a coarse jest, how he had befooled the Princess Marie, and he kept his boon companions in roars of laughter by recalling his more striking expressions of religious fervour. But the tragedy of it all was that the princess firmly believed in him, and when on the third day of his visit he formally proposed for her hand, she willingly promised to marry him.

The news created something of a sensation in Europe. Prince Bismarck, who hated Ferdinand, was astonished. It seemed to him incredible that any decent girl could bear the sight of the loathsome scoundrel, but the wily old diplomat kept his opinions to himself, save only once. Then he gave his intimates to understand that he expected that both Ferdinand and Marie would be chased out of Bulgaria by a frenzied mob within five years.

The marriage duly took place, and Marie,

## A ROYAL ROGUE

---

anxious to make the best impression on her subjects, entered the Bulgarian capital in the dress of a native woman. It was a happy little hit, for it gained her instant popularity. The people instantly took a liking to the pretty princess with the retiring manner. They were sorry for her, too, though they hoped for the best.

If the Princess Marie quickly discovered her mistake, she kept it to herself, and for some months appeared to be quite content. Ferdinand went about his State duties in his usual tearing, raging manner, and some of the friends he invited to dine at the palace were obvious, professional murderers; but Marie, who had been told that she must expect little refinement in Bulgaria, adapted herself to her new life, and did all she could to make everyone pleasant.

However, disillusionment had to come some time. It was not to be expected that Ferdinand could go on for ever hiding his real self from his wife. He was bound to give himself away, and he eventually did so just as everybody thought he would.

His wife began to notice that he was particularly curt with her chief lady-in-waiting, and anxious that nothing should disturb the harmony of the royal household, she inquired the cause. But neither her husband nor the lady would give an explanation, and it was not until Ferdinand publicly insulted the lady that she gave him away to his wife.

Then Marie learned to her horror that Ferdinand had endeavoured to make love to the lady-in-waiting. She had, of course, indignantly rejected the king, and only for the sake of Ferdinand's wife had she refrained from leaving the country immediately.

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

Poor Marie could hardly believe her, but when she timidly asked her husband what he thought of the "libel," he callously confirmed the story. The princess protested, and was met with curses. She talked of returning home, and Ferdinand of Bulgaria, who "led his army from behind," struck her across the mouth. It was the first blow she had received from him, but it was by no means the last. Ferdinand, like the coward he is, has never been afraid to strike a woman.

She was a different woman from that hour. All the brightness fled from her eyes, and a far-away look took possession of them. After striking her Ferdinand had told her, in a passion, something of the truth. He had boasted of the ladies who had fallen under his sway, and he had told her anecdotes of his early life in Vienna which filled her with horror. That night she realised to the full the hideous mistake she had made in marrying him.

But it was too late. She must bear her lot. Children came, and she tried to find consolation in them, but there was always the tall, sinister figure of her husband standing over her like a black shadow. It was no uncommon experience for her to feel his blows now. Once she had protested against the presence in the palace of an ex-army officer who had been convicted of murder of the foulest and most treacherous kind, and had been sentenced to death.

"You must receive him," said Ferdinand, with an oath. "Have I not pardoned him? He is now free, and I mean to give him a high command in my army."

"I refuse to let him pollute my home," she said, with remarkable spirit. Ferdinand caught her by



## A ROYAL ROGUE

---

the arm with such ferocity and severity that he bruised the tender skin, and she could not appear without long black sleeves for several weeks.

"You will do exactly as I please," he said, with a vicious snap of his lips, "and I shall particularly observe you to-night. If you are not very cordial to my friend I'll——"

He flung her from him as footsteps were heard, and the next moment the court chamberlain was presenting to Ferdinand a well-known German traveller and explorer, who was to dine and sleep at the palace that night. This German afterwards wrote an account of his experiences in a Berlin paper, which fully exposed the real character of Ferdinand of Bulgaria.

Poor Marie did what she could not to show her hostility towards the Bulgarian cut-throat who was her husband's most intimate friend, but she must have failed, because in the early hours of the morning her shrieks were heard throughout the palace, and the terrified servants were on the point of bursting into the royal bedroom to rescue her when Ferdinand himself appeared in the corridor and the cries ceased. But Marie did not appear outside her room for over a week.

Ferdinand went from brutality to brutality. He loved to persecute the poor girl, who had fallen into his clutches. It delighted him exceedingly to see the tears trickling down her cheeks, and it caused him to shout with glee when his unfortunate wife with her children shrank from his evil glances.

"A man must rule in his own household," he said to his Prime Minister, who, by the way, he caused to be murdered shortly afterwards, "and I brook no interference in my house."

Why did Marie put up with all this evil treat-

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

ment when she had powerful relations who would have helped her to escape from her savage husband? The answer is that she feared to be separated from her children. She knew that Ferdinand hated them as much as he hated her, and she would not willingly leave them behind her to be at the mercy of her scoundrel husband.

When she had married, her father, the Duke of Parma, had stipulated that all his daughter's children should be baptised into the Catholic Church, and not into that of the National Church of Bulgaria. Ferdinand had promised, and the promise was kept—for a time. But when his son and heir, Prince Boris, reached the age of three, he decided that the boy must be formally admitted into the Bulgarian Church.

In vain Marie protested. Ferdinand, who went in daily terror of assassination, had determined on this step because he thought it would make him popular with his subjects. It mattered nothing to him what his son was, or whether he was properly brought up or not. He wished to see and hear Bulgarians praising him for his "devotion" to their Church, and, despite the opposition of many powerful personages, he carried out his threat. The small boy was made to attend a public ceremony in which he formally renounced his adhesion to the Catholic Church and embraced the rites of the Bulgarian Church. It was a pathetic and at the same time ludicrous scene. The child's mother kept away from it, broken-hearted, and whilst she nursed her youngest child she could not fail to hear the thunderous applause which greeted her husband as he drove through the streets with his three-year-old son. She thought that Ferdinand had at last achieved popularity, and she never knew that the

## A ROYAL ROGUE

---

applause had been arranged for by Ferdinand himself.

Little Prince Boris had been terrified into refraining from tears during the ceremony, and as long as his father had been with him the child had managed to remain dry-eyed, but the moment he was taken from the royal carriage and permitted to enter the palace he instantly ran in search of his mother, imploring her not to let that "bad man" get hold of him again. Ferdinand heard the candour of the child, and it filled his black heart with fury.

Five minutes later he was confronting Marie, who had her three children clinging to her. The royal murderer threatened and cursed her, and when Prince Boris, thinking his father was going to strike her, tried to interpose his little frail body between his father and his mother, Ferdinand savagely kicked the child across the room. With a shriek, Marie stooped to pick up the half-conscious boy, but Ferdinand, now acting like a lunatic, struck her in the face, and she measured her length on the floor. He only paused to see if she would rise, and finding she did not do so, he left the room.

When Marie came to, she was surrounded by her terrified children, and dusk was filling the room with a sort of damp darkness. She rose and rang for a servant, and when the lamps had been lighted she began to attend to Boris, who had been badly hurt. He was taken to bed at once, and a doctor called in. Soon Marie was surrounded by a dozen servants, and she was compelled to act a part and to pretend that all was well with her. But she was rapidly reviewing the situation. She knew that she could never know peace or happiness in Sofia again,

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

and when she had made up her mind she sent her second child off to bed. She retained her baby, because she had decided to leave Sofia that night and return to her father and tell him how her life as well as her heart had been broken.

With the help of faithful friends she got out of Bulgaria unmolested, and arrived safely at her father's palace. The duke instantly calmed her agitated mind by fully endorsing her act. He declared that he would take every care of her, and that she need fear nothing.

Meanwhile Ferdinand presiding over an entertainment at the house of a friend, which quickly degenerated into an orgy, was carried back to his palace at four in the morning, to be met by a terrified chamberlain with the startling information that his wife had fled from Sofia. The intoxicated ruffian was instantly sobered by the news. A groan burst from him. He knew that Marie would have the support of every decent person in Europe. Perhaps the scandal would give the Bulgarians courage to rise and dethrone him—nay, worse than that, murder him. He burst into tears and began to mumble explanations of his innocence. The world would misjudge him, but he swore that he was the best of husbands.

As soon as the telegraph offices were open he despatched a message to Marie imploring her to return. Then, before she had time to accuse him, he sent long explanations to the heads of all the ruling houses in Europe. A particularly oily message, written in his own hand, was forwarded to the Pope, who read it with interest, and gratified Ferdinand by offering to receive him in person so that he might explain further. Ferdinand immediately set off for Rome, where he expected to gain

## A ROYAL ROGUE

---

a personal triumph, but before inviting him, the Pope had caused discreet inquiries to be made, and the result was that when Ferdinand entered his presence the Pontiff knew all about the brutalities of which poor Marie had been the victim. He gave Ferdinand about the worst quarter of an hour that vicious scoundrel has ever experienced in his life, and when he emerged into the street he was very pale, and his limbs were trembling. He left Rome at once, swearing he would never set foot in it again.

But he realised that if he wished to save his own neck he must induce his wife to return. He did not like her, but she was popular with his subjects, and he knew that unless he effected a speedy reconciliation with her he would be assassinated in the streets of Sofia. He therefore redoubled his efforts, and abased himself to the Emperor of Austria and the German Kaiser. The latter was for siding with him, but old Francis Joseph could not forget that little Prince Boris had been forcibly made to change his faith—if a child of three can do anything so important. Nevertheless, it was Francis Joseph in the end who caused Marie to return to Sofia. He let her know that her place was with her family, and he expressed the opinion that after this exposure and the fright she had given her husband he would never ill-treat her again.

Marie listened respectfully and gave way. She was anxious to see her other children, and, woman-like, she was quite ready to forgive. When she granted her husband an interview, and he shed tears of repentance and swore that he would be the model husband in future, she was enchanted.

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

"I will come back," she said quietly, wiping her eyes. "I am sure the children must miss me."

But Ferdinand meant to prevent her ever leaving Sofia again, and from the day she returned to the royal palace he had spies placed near her, who reported every movement and every remark she made. It was known in a very small circle of his own creatures that he would kill her with his own hand rather than give her the chance to create a second scandal, and because he felt that he could trust his spies he recommenced his brutalities within a month of her return.

She got so accustomed to his blows and kicks that she ceased complaining. She wrote to her father, but any letters which contained references to his conduct were intercepted and destroyed. Poor Marie became dispirited and longed to die. Life no longer interested her. She had not the strength to defend her children from their father, and the courtiers—all creatures of her husband's—seemed to see nothing unusual in her unhappy position.

Ferdinand insulted her in public and private. He removed from the court two ladies who had expressed sympathy with her, and in every possible way he increased her misery.

During those tragic days when Ferdinand was enjoying himself in Sofia and Vienna the doctors were in daily attendance on his unhappy wife. In vain they urged her to rouse herself. She could only answer with a wistful expression that she did not wish to live.

One day an eminent doctor whispered to his colleague that in his opinion their patient was certain to die. He thought that she was asleep or he would not have spoken, but it happened that

## A ROYAL ROGUE

---

Marie was awake, although she had been lying with her eyes closed. Instantly her face flushed, and her eyes lighted up.

"Oh, doctor," she said, in a kind of ecstasy, "if that is true, thank God—thank God!"

The horrified doctor could only stare at her. In all his experience he had never before met a woman who prayed for death in order to escape from the ill-treatment of her husband. But, knowing the truth, he could not say a word.

A few days later Marie gave birth to a baby girl, and twenty-four hours later Ferdinand of Bulgaria was a widower. He had practically murdered his wife, for when Marie Louise of Bourbon died on January 31, 1899, she was only twenty-nine, and she had been married to him less than six years.

## CHAPTER VII

### QUEEN NATALIE OF SERBIA

ONE day a beautiful Russian girl, who, at fifteen, was as well developed as the average woman, was walking through a wood, when she was accosted by a toothless old gipsy, who begged to be allowed to read her hand. There was something alluringly weird about the ancient witch, and Natalie Keshko, the daughter of Colonel Keshko, the wealthiest man in the district, scarcely hesitated. She was always ready for mischief and adventure, and very soon the gipsy was bending over her hand and muttering strange words to herself.

"What is it?" asked Natalie, becoming impatient. "Don't be afraid to tell me the truth. Am I to be an old maid?"

The gipsy stared at the happy young face, the dark limpid eyes, and the fascinating, very kissable lips.

"You will be a queen," she said, slowly. Natalie laughed gleefully.

"That'll be grand," she cried, clapping her hands. "I ought to make a good queen, for a crown will suit me."

"You will be an unhappy queen, and you will die in exile," continued the fortune-teller, remorselessly. "It is written on your hand. I cannot lie, my pretty one."



## QUEEN NATALIE OF SERBIA'

---

The girl gave her a piece of silver, and the old creature hobbled away, but if she thought she had frightened Natalie Keshko she was greatly mistaken. She had only excited and interested her.

"I won't mind being unhappy, if I am a queen," she said to herself, as she hastened back to her father's mansion to proclaim the great news.

Colonel Keshko laughed uproariously, and for weeks the story of the encounter between the fortune-teller and his daughter provided him with considerable opportunities for humorous comment. But Natalie did not mind. Of course, the prophecy seemed absurd on the face of it. She did not belong even to the nobility, and as for becoming a queen, well, she lived in such an out-of-the-way place that it was very seldom she met an eligible gentleman of her own class.

But the turning-point in her career came sooner than expected. An old school friend, who had married a Russian diplomat stationed at Belgrade, invited Natalie to spend a few weeks with her. The invitation was only too gladly accepted, and the beautiful Russian heiress made her entry into Serbian society. From the start she was a success. Men crowded round the beauty with the witty tongue, who was wise beyond her years, and were fascinated by her. She had half-a-dozen proposals in a month, but she rejected them all. Perhaps she was waiting for the fairy prince to come along, and if so, her belief in the gipsy was justified, for shortly afterwards, at a reception at the house of the Russian Minister in Belgrade, Natalie Keshko was presented to the reigning Prince of Serbia, Milan. He was not yet twenty-one, and his bad upbringing had not failed to leave its marks on his countenance, but he had a person-

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

ality and a certain charm, and when he fell straightway in love with Natalie and asked her to marry him, she could honestly accept him, because she already loved him in return.

Colonel Keshko was immediately informed of the proposed marriage, and, knowing what he did of Milan, strongly objected to it. Natalie urged him to be reasonable.

"I must be a queen, father," she said, anxiously. "I can't escape my fate, and I love Milan."

"You're conveniently forgetting the second part of the gipsy's prediction," he answered, gravely. "She said you were to be an unhappy queen, and you were to spend most of your life in exile. If you marry Milan of Serbia it is certain that he will break your heart. He has that reputation."

Of course, the much-in-love girl indignantly denied this. She was crazy about the young prince, and her father, who could not deny her anything, eventually gave way, and the marriage took place. It was a popular one with the Serbians, who accorded her a hearty welcome after she had become their reigning princess. As yet Natalie was not a queen, for some years were to lapse before Milan declared himself king, but she knew that she would be a queen one day, and she was content.

She was only sixteen and her husband twenty-one when they started life together, and at first they were delightfully happy. The bright, vivacious girl easily took and maintained her place at the head of Belgrade society, and she did not neglect the more responsible of her duties. She was kind and charitable, and could be all things to all men and women with a grace and a charm that gained her a popularity she never lost. It was

## QUEEN NATALIE OF SERBIA'

---

well for her that her conduct was above reproach, for the time was to come when the people of Belgrade were to repay her with interest for her devotion to them when she was most powerful.

As is generally the case, the descent into unhappiness was gradual. When Natalie realised that Milan was beginning to neglect her she would hardly believe it, but she tried to get what consolation she could by devoting herself to her son, who had been born in 1876, a year after their marriage. Her husband was also particularly fond of the child, and the queen—as she was now—hoped that he would be a bond between them. She congratulated herself that Milan had not been attracted by another woman, for she had had careful inquiries made, and the only person Milan had been seen with was a middle-aged, ugly woman known as Madame Christich. Natalie laughed at the idea of Milan, who could not bear ugliness, falling in love with such a woman, and she continued to hope for the best.

She went on living in her fool's paradise until the day she expressed a wish to her lady-in-waiting to visit Topchider, a place which had been deserted since the murder of Prince Michael in 1868. Legends had grown up around the house and grounds, and the superstitious country folk whispered that the ghost of Prince Michael walked the grounds on certain afternoons. Natalie asked Milan to take her there. He refused with so much vehemence that her curiosity became intensified. When he positively forbade her to go near Topchider she secretly resolved to pay it a visit unknown to him.

For a week or two she did not mention Topchider, but when Milan announced that he was

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

going to spend a couple of days away from Belgrade on important State business, Natalie decided that such a chance to gratify her curiosity would never occur again. She took the lady-in-waiting to whom she had first mentioned the subject into her confidence, and, having curtly rejected her advice to stay at home, ordered a closed carriage, and with the anxious companion beside her set out for Topchider woods.

The carriage reached the estate and drove in through the gateway and down the drive lined by ancient trees. There was a general air of neglect about the place that gave it a pathetic appearance. Natalie, half-expecting to see the ghost of Prince Michael, stared out of the carriage window, and when she suddenly caught a glimpse not of the ghost, but of her husband, it was a cry of joy which caused Milan to start, wheel round, and face her.

Then Natalie knew that he had been standing under a tree with his arms around a woman, and that woman was Madame Christich!

With fury in her heart, the jealous queen confronted her husband, and there was a terrible scene, while Madame Christich stood in the background with a sneer on her ugly face.

Milan would have assaulted his wife had not the coachman been there to protect her, and when husband and wife met again in the palace at Belgrade that night there was another furious quarrel.

Did Queen Natalie recall the gipsy's prediction as she lay awake all night weeping bitterly? I think she did. She was an unhappy queen now and for all time, and exile was only a question of time.

Her first impulse was to leave Serbia, but for the

## QUEEN NATALIE OF SERBIA'

---

sake of her son she remained. Milan, however, did not trouble to maintain any pretence of affection or respect for her. Madame Christich was his idol. It was common knowledge in Belgrade that he called on Madame Christich every day, and the Serbians used to line up in the streets to see the king drive in an open carriage with parcels by his side. They knew that the latter were costly presents for the woman who had hypnotised him.

Quarrels at the palace were daily occurrences now, and little Prince Alexander had a most unhappy time. He would stand in terror and see his mother denounce his father and the latter strike her in his fury. No wonder the boy's character was affected. Anyone who knows the story of his early life and how he was educated can scarcely wonder at the events that led up to the catastrophe of 1903, when he was murdered with his wife.

However, Natalie, still very beautiful and young, suppressed her natural inclinations to fly from the man who had ruined her life, and she did all she could for her son. It was easy to pretend that her boy made up for the loss of her husband's love, and there was certainly a lot of consolation in the fact that she was the most popular person in the country. The crowds cheered her when she drove out, and in her darkest hours she received scores of offers of help from chivalrous officers and students.

But the state of affairs could not continue for very long, and the climax came on Easter Sunday, 1888. It is the Serbian custom for the king and queen to go to the cathedral, attended by all the principal personages in the capital. At the conclusion of the service the king says "Christ is risen" to each gentleman, who answers, "He is

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

risen, indeed," and is then kissed by his majesty. A similar ceremony takes place between the queen and the ladies.

On this occasion the custom was observed as usual, and Queen Natalie, only twenty-nine, and still remarkably beautiful, was easily the most attractive figure in the cathedral. She received her friends, exchanged salutations, and kissed them in turn, but when about a dozen had passed her presence she saw to her extreme horror and indignation that Madame Christich was approaching her with an evil grin of triumph on her face. The woman had declared that she would make Queen Natalie kiss her in public, and now under the eyes of the king she was going to justify her boast.

The queen drew back with a look of disdain, and there was a very embarrassing pause. Then Madame Christich turned slowly and fixed her magnetic eyes upon Milan. He took a step forward, and in a curt voice, which was heard by every member of the congregation, said, "I command you to kiss Madame Christich."

The queen remained rigid. The blood mounted to Milan's cheeks. All the time the eyes of the woman were upon him. He clenched his fists for a moment, and then sprang at his wife, trying to clutch her by the throat.

It was lucky for the queen that there were men present, who saved her from her husband that morning, for Milan would undoubtedly have strangled her there and then. But they dragged him from her, and Natalie's friends saw her safely to her carriage. The queen bowed her thanks. Words were beyond her.

It was now, of course, impossible for her to remain in Belgrade, and she immediately started

## QUEEN NATALIE OF SERBIA

---

for Wiesbaden, taking her son with her. She did not mind exile provided she had her child. But Milan did not intend that she should have even that small modicum of happiness, and he appealed to the kaiser, who had just ascended the throne, to return Prince Alexander to him. William II, a brute and a coward in those days, as he is now, remembered that Queen Natalie was a Russian. He did not like Milan, indeed, he openly despised him, but here was a chance to hurt a Russian lady and add another sorrow to a mother already overburdened with misery. He therefore sent half-a-dozen police to take Prince Alexander from Natalie and convey him to the representatives of King Milan.

They obeyed instructions, and mother and son were separated, and the police, we may be sure, did not forget to insult the queen and mother in characteristic German fashion.

Queen Natalie was an exile now, deprived of her son and hated by her husband. She had indeed paid a heavy price for her ambition. Sometimes she stole into Belgrade, and dressed in black and heavily veiled, would haunt the neighbourhood of the palace, hoping to catch a glimpse of her son. If she saw him for a few moments she felt richly rewarded for her trouble, but her visits were always cut short by the enthusiasm of her friends. The Serbians loved her, and in Belgrade her journeys to and from the station were triumphal processions.

Milan was furious, and in a mean, underhand way he endeavoured to spite his wife by persecuting her friends. Only a direct threat by a party of students to drag him out of his palace and hang him in the street prevented him driving to the unpretentious house Queen Natalie occupied when-

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

ever she was in Belgrade and assaulting her with hands already stained with the blood of many Serbian notabilities who had befriended his wife.

But the most grievous blow Natalie had to bear was the intelligence that Prince Alexander was being taught to despise her. Milan was taking advantage of her absence to blacken her character to the young prince, and he all but succeeded in achieving his object.

Alexander, however, for all his failings, was of a warm-hearted, affectionate nature, and his mother's unfortunate position touched him. He would not agree to banish her from his life, and if he consented to avoid meeting her he occasionally brought a little sunshine into her life by writing her letters, which, however ill-spelt, were very precious to the exiled queen who was eating her heart out at Biarritz.

In that favourite resort Natalie had to be a helpless spectator of her husband's and son's march to disaster. Less than a year after her flight from Belgrade Milan abdicated and Alexander became king. He was only thirteen, and a council of ministers ruled in his name. Natalie paid him a few visits, but as each one brought Milan back from the cafés of Vienna and Paris to upbraid him, Alexander was forced by his ministers to ask his mother not to reside in his capital. Her presence there only created difficulties for him.

Once she refused to leave, and when the soldiers came to remove her by force the people took her part, and there was a battle in the streets. Several lives were lost, and the only result was Natalie's forcible removal across the frontier.

The youthful king once brought his parents together and asked them, for his sake and for the



## QUEEN NATALIE OF SERBIA

---

sake of their country, to be reconciled. Natalie was willing to forgive and forget. Milan said he would do the same, and before the interview was over was reviling his wife and threatening to have her murdered. After that there was nothing to be done but to keep them apart.

While Milan was making himself the laughing-stock of Europe, Natalie remained in retirement at Biarritz. She had to have her residence guarded, because her husband was often heard to threaten to murder her, and when he had mortgaged to various money-lenders the annual allowance of £10,000 granted to him by the Serbian Government he tried unsuccessfully to obtain advances from his much-injured queen.

Perhaps it was some satisfaction to her to hear that he had quarrelled with Madame Christich and that that Austrian adventuress and spy was black-mailing him. Truly the way of transgressors is hard!

Milan found it so as he went from court to court frantically endeavouring to borrow sufficient money to buy from Madame Christich the indiscreet letters he had written to her. It is amusing to remember that he actually asked the kaiser to lend him the amount, and William II refused. What would the arch-Hun have said had he known at the time that the letters contained the most savage criticisms of himself? It was the Sultan of Turkey who eventually bought the documents from Madame Christich.

Milan was at the end of his resources when King Alexander offered him the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Serbian Army. The ex-king promptly returned to Belgrade, and had the time of his life, selling all the posts at his disposal to the highest bidders and spending his days and nights in riotous

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

living. Alexander scarcely thought of his poor, broken-hearted mother, who was longing to be near him, but his father repaid him for his kindness by plotting against his life and his throne. When the conspiracy was revealed the young king promptly banished his father.

Two great sorrows remained to further darken Natalie's life, and she was indirectly responsible for both herself, although she was an unconscious agent. She had not seen her son for over a year, and she urged him to pay her a visit. At last he yielded to her entreaties and made the journey to Biarritz. As a rule he stayed a couple of days and then hurried away, but on this occasion he spent the greater part of a week with his mother. Before he left he disillusioned her, for Queen Natalie had fondly imagined that she was the attraction, but her son informed her that he had grown to love Draga Mashin, her lady-in-waiting. The queen was horrified, and begged him to marry a lady of royal blood instead of this girl who was merely a servant.

The king, however, would not listen to her, and he swore he would marry Draga.

In due course the news was conveyed to Milan, who was now to be seen nightly in a state of intoxication in a Paris café. He nearly went out of his mind, so great was his rage, and he swore that Natalie had brought the engagement about in order to spite him.

On the morning the wedding took place Alexander telegraphed to his mother. She did not answer, but spent the day in weeping and fasting.

Natalie knew that Milan had fashioned his son after himself. Perhaps she blamed herself for

## QUEEN NATALIE OF SERBIA'

---

having fled from Belgrade, and thereby giving her husband the opportunity to separate her from her son. Had she been allowed to educate Alexander he would have turned out a different person. Realisation of the truth was all the more bitter now, because she loved him with all the love her starved and broken heart was capable of.

Alexander was married in July, 1900, and in the following February ex-King Milan died, and Natalie was a widow. But his death was hardly any relief to her now. She was absorbed by the troubles her son had brought upon himself by his ill-fated marriage. The Serbian people were dead against the union, and Queen Natalie knew that the end could not be very far off. Her helplessness to serve her son was simply torture to her. Sometimes she sent him warnings, but they were ignored. A year passed, and to her surprise Alexander was still King of Serbia. Another went by, and Natalie began to believe that the young king would triumph over his enemies after all.

But, as all the world knows, she was mistaken. One night in June, 1903, when the royal couple were thinking of the third anniversary of their wedding, they were brutally murdered by a number of officers, who combined to rid Serbia of the Obrenovich dynasty and give Serbia a chance to save herself under the guidance of another king.

Natalie heard of the tragedy the day after it took place. She did not utter a word or shed a tear, but it is said that since that terrible day she has not been seen to smile.

She has since devoted herself to good works, and a few months before the late war she turned over 27,000 acres to the Belgrade University, a valuable collection of arms made by King Milan

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

and King Alexander to the National Museum, and the libraries of her son to the Academy of Science. With these gifts her connection with the country where she played so conspicuous a part was severed.

## CHAPTER VIII

### KING HUMBERT'S ENGAGEMENT

KING HUMBERT of Italy was very popular with both sexes. He had that rare gift of personal magnetism, and his known love of peace won for him the regard of those who laboured for the advance of civilisation. When heir to the throne of Italy, he was courted and flattered by toadies, but he saw through them, and, aiming at a domestic policy for his beloved country, he surrounded himself with statesmen belonging to all parties, and admitted them to his confidence.

It is not surprising, therefore, that when he reached manhood the subject of his marriage should have been widely discussed. The whole of Italy realised that it would be a very important event for them, for it would help to shape their destinies, and it was with genuine regret that they learnt that religious differences would prevent him marrying into the British royal family. Great Britain being excluded, the only countries that seemed in the running were Germany, Austria, and Spain, but there were not many eligible Spanish princesses, and the issue was narrowed down to the two first-named.

There could not be any doubt, however, that the Italians did not wish to see a German woman on their throne. The world was full of beautiful

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

women. The Italians hated the Hohenzollerns and all their works, and, as the lesser of two evils, they hoped that when Humbert did make his choice, it would fall upon an Austrian.

But they forgot one important matter, and that was the temperament of the prince, who did not wish to make a marriage of convenience. It was about time, he thought, that the absurd conventions of courts should be dispensed with, and royalties allowed to behave like human beings. Indeed, he did not hide his opinions, greatly to the alarm of his parents, who feared that he would complicate the situation by marrying morganatically. They need not have worried, however, for it fell out that when Humbert went in search of a wife, there was never any danger of his finding her outside the ranks of royalty.

Full of his notions regarding etiquette, he made his way to the most etiquette-ridden country in the world, Austria, where Francis Joseph welcomed him with open arms, because he wanted Humbert to marry one of his relatives, and end the feud between the two countries.

The times were favourable for the little plot, because Austria was then very rich in youthful beauties. There was a bevy of archduchesses, all closely related to Francis Joseph, whose loveliness had become a proverb. The Empress Elizabeth was the reigning beauty, but there were several rivals for the position, and, in the circumstances, it was only natural that the Hofburg in Vienna should be the Mecca of all princes who wanted wives who had beauty, position, and wealth.

Humbert arrived at the beginning of the gayest season Vienna had known for ten years, and he instantly became the guest of honour. Francis

## KING HUMBERT'S ENGAGEMENT

---

Joseph threw the Hofburg open to all his relations, friends, and ministers, and he spent thousands of pounds on the most lavish of entertainments. The word went forth that an effort was to be made to capture Humbert for Austria, and that the emperor would be displeased if the prince returned without being engaged to one of the archduchesses. Of course, several of the girls had lost their hearts already to youthful cousins, but there were a score at least who were heartwhole, and they formed an irresistible battalion.

It was a memorable week in Humbert's life. All the youth, jollity, gaiety, and vivacity of Vienna seemed to be assembled in the Hofburg. Clear, youthful voices filled the palace, and banished its habitual gloom. Beauties in wonderful dresses flitted around and about him, and, added to the amazing luxury which he met with everywhere, quite carried him off his feet.

Archduchesses were presented to him, and to every meal he escorted a different beauty. He could not make up his mind about them. One moment he would believe that he had found the very girl he dreamed of, but the next he would forget her with the coming of another. In fact, Francis Joseph was in danger of overdoing it, because Humbert, who had a large heart, almost decided that he must forget them all, because he could not propose to one in particular.

On the last night of his stay a grand ball was given in his honour in the famous salon of the Hofburg. It was the event of the year, and Francis Joseph and Empress Elizabeth appeared together, and led the royal cotillion, an unprecedented affair. For the first hour Humbert was forced to remain at the emperor's end of the room,

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

but after that he took to choosing his partners at random, and because Francis Joseph had given orders that he should be humoured, Austrian etiquette was slightly relaxed.

At three in the morning Humbert was dancing. By now, however, most of the archduchesses had begun to feel the strain, and were gradually retiring with their ladies-in-waiting, but a few remained for the sake of the prince, and did their best to keep up with his exuberant spirits. At half-past three practically all the royalties had retired, and Humbert, bereft of a partner, was glancing round in search of one, when his eyes alighted upon the Archduchess Elizabeth, the empress's god-daughter. He had danced with her earlier in the evening, but, despite the lateness of the hour, she was as fresh as ever, thanks to her enthusiasm and her eighteen years.

The archduchess was very beautiful, with a mixture of youth and stateliness that was very fascinating, but she was only one of many, and there was a certain cousin of hers whom the prince had been thinking of for two days. It was, therefore, without any intention of falling in love with her that he invited Elizabeth to dance the last waltz with him. The girl willingly complied. She loved dancing, and she could have gone on for hours more, if only she had not been prevented by etiquette from expressing her wishes.

She danced divinely, and Humbert, with his arm around her waist, and his face close to hers, steered her round the ballroom, while his eyes drank in the rich and rare beauty of her countenance. They might have been dancing on air, they were so light-footed, and, in less than five minutes, Humbert was scarcely conscious of the music or the dancing; he



## KING HUMBERT'S ENGAGEMENT

---

could only see a fair, young face and a pair of brown eyes that radiated with happiness and the joy of life.

Elizabeth had never been mentioned in connection with Humbert, for she was considered too young, and she had elder sisters in the early twenties who were more prepared for marriage. No attempt had been made yet to instruct her in the subjects with which a future queen must be familiar, and she had only just left the schoolroom. If she had ever thought of marriage, she kept the fact to herself, and it was only with girlish enthusiasm that she danced with Humbert. She would have acted the same with any partner.

When the dance was finished, Humbert was seized with a desire for a quiet chat with the archduchess, and he led her to an alcove, where they sat down. Elizabeth chatted away, asking innumerable questions, and once or twice hinting that she was dying to know which of her cousins his royal highness had fallen in love with. Humbert's embarrassment did not worry her.

"I will answer your questions to-morrow," he said, with a smile, wondering what she would have done had he told her that he had only at that moment made up his mind, and that he was head over heels in love with her. The girl talked on, and Humbert was content to listen, and to assure himself that the Hofburg could not be such a bad place after all, if such a lovely little lady as the Archduchess Elizabeth could grow up in it.

The girl went to bed that night in a peculiar frame of mind. It hurt her to know that Humbert was to start for home within a few hours, and that she would soon be reading about his engagement. She did not sleep long, and, in spite of her exertions at

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

the ball, she breakfasted with the emperor, who had retired an hour before midnight.

To her surprise and gratification Prince Humbert was there too, and if he bore signs of the strain of a week's festivities, Elizabeth did not see them. Somehow that chat with him had revealed a new Prince Humbert to her. She realised the strong point of his character, and knew something of his weakness, too, and she admired him for both.

The meal was stiff and formal, and the arrival of despatch boxes enabled the prince and the archduchess to leave the room without disrespect to the emperor. The numerous members of the royal family scattered in the direction of their own apartments, but Humbert and Elizabeth descended the grand staircase to the picture gallery, where nearly all the Hapsburg engagements have taken place. It seemed to have been designed for the purpose that Humbert required it for, and when he and the archduchess were going towards the windows overlooking the gardens he detained her with a gesture. Royal proposals are usually quite unromantic, but Humbert was in love, and, in the passionate language of his native land, he told Elizabeth that he loved her, and asked her consent to share his fortunes. The girl listened in astonishment, but her emotions were pleasant, and she could have cried for joy, because now that he had spoken, she knew why it was that she had been so sorry at the prospect of not seeing him again.

She answered him in the way he desired, and, although it was against the etiquette of the Hapsburgs for lovers to kiss before the emperor had formally sanctioned their betrothal, they did not hesitate to break that rule. A few delicious minutes followed, and then the coming of the usual

## KING HUMBERT'S ENGAGEMENT

---

crowd of hangers-on at a court left Humbert with no other choice but to leave Elizabeth and acquaint the emperor with his decision.

Francis Joseph was delighted, and plainly showed it. He had, of course, never thought of the youthful archduchess as a possible wife for the future King of Italy, but that did not worry him. The emperor thrilled with pride as he assured himself that by skilful diplomacy he had healed the breach between his own country and Italy.

Within ten minutes the news was all over the Hofburg and an hour later Vienna was discussing it.

Humbert was a different man from that hour, and as his happiness was infectious his popularity increased. Humbert wanted everybody to share it with him. He had realised with a wonderful joy that it was possible for a future king to find a wife amongst his own class who was capable of exciting within his breast a strong and enduring love.

It cannot be said that the other courts of Europe received the announcement with pleasure. The Hohenzollerns, who had yet to capture Austria body and soul, feared that it might result in Francis Joseph and Humbert forming an alliance to prevent Prussia enslaving Europe, and from the emperor downwards many interested persons made tremendous efforts to break the engagement. The people of Italy were also suspicious at first, but they were soon convinced that Humbert was in love and because they were devoted to him they cheered him frantically in the streets, and bought pictures of the Archduchess Elizabeth by tens of thousands.

The genial and popular prince who was to be so

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

successful a king had a charm that was irresistible, welcome his bride, when she was due to arrive in and, for his sake, great preparations were made to Italy to take her place by his side.

There was, of course, no necessity for a long engagement. Humbert's father was particularly anxious for him to marry, and Francis Joseph was equally in a hurry to hand his relative over into the Italian prince's keeping. Elizabeth was now the pet of the Hofburg and she revelled in her unexpected popularity and eminence. Whenever she drove out she was cheered by the crowds, and very often she was escorted back to the palace by an enthusiastic mob, who had been taken captive by her loveliness.

Elizabeth, before she was eighteen, had started to smoke, and, had Francis Joseph known about it, he would have gone crazy at the idea of an arch-duchess imitating one of the harmless "vices" of the men, but the girl, becoming fond of cigarettes, introduced several of her young relatives to the weed, and they became enthusiastic smokers, too. Whenever possible, they assembled in her room and consumed a box of choice cigarettes, but it was not long before they found that they could not do without them at other times. Elizabeth took to smoking at all hours, and she was daring enough to light up in the salons, taking care, however, to throw away the cigarette on the approach of the emperor.

The empress would have disapproved of this, too, but she was not often at court now, and Francis Joseph had to console himself without her as best he could. He prided himself upon maintaining the rigid etiquette of his house, and those relatives of his who offended were instantly banished from

## KING HUMBERT'S ENGAGEMENT

---

his presence. The Archduchess Elizabeth did not wish to begin married life with Francis Joseph's enmity. She liked him, for he had done her many kindnesses, but she could not give up smoking, because it had become a passion with her.

Practically all the younger princesses were devotees of the weed by now, and Elizabeth was known in royal circles for her taste in cigarettes. Everywhere she went she carried a small box of them with her. She had some narrow escapes of being found out by the emperor, but she always managed to escape, and, as he was incapable of believing that a future queen could be guilty of the crime of puffing a cigarette, he never suspected her.

It was some months after her engagement to Humbert that a ball was given by the Austrian Emperor at the Hofburg. Elizabeth, conscious that she would be keenly scrutinised, dressed for the function with extreme care. Her happiness had, if possible, made her more beautiful than ever, and she looked very charming and attractive. Her lady-in-waiting was sincere when she burst into ecstasies over her appearance. There could be no doubt as to who was going to be the belle of the ball.

The entertainment was to be opened by the emperor at ten o'clock, and, after the usual banquet, the guests strolled through the staterooms, awaiting the arrival of his imperial majesty. Of course, Elizabeth could not let the opportunity for a smoke escape her, and her footsteps led her towards a cosy alcove, where she knew she could enjoy a cigarette in comfort, and at the same time keep an eye open for the coming of the emperor. With a sigh of satisfaction she lighted the cigarette, and, as the minutes slipped by, the archduchess hoped

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

that his majesty would be delayed for some time yet, for, on account of the protracted proceedings at the dinner, she had not been able to smoke for three hours.

Suddenly a lady of the court came to her greatly agitated, and whispered that the emperor was coming. Elizabeth started as she saw Francis Joseph approaching her. She had the lighted cigarette in her right hand, and, as it was too late to throw it away, she thrust it behind her back, and waited for the imperial procession to pass into the ballroom. When the emperor was opposite to her she curtseyed to him, and, with a paternal smile, he went on, and a moment later the band crashed out the strains of the Austrian National Anthem.

But, simultaneously with the music came a terrible shriek from the young archduchess. She had forgotten that she was wearing the flimsiest of dresses, every bit of which was highly inflammable, and, while she had been curtseying to his majesty, the cigarette had lighted it.

The princess was found a lifeless mass, and all that remained of the once lovely face were scarred and disfigured features. Not until it was all over did the emperor hear of the tragedy, for the noise of the band had drowned the girl's cries. Of course, the ball ended, and the Hofburg instantly became gloomy and ghostly.

They carried the corpse to another room, and the emperor, with his own hand, wrote to tell Humbert of the tragedy. The prince was heart-broken, and for weeks remained shut up in his palace, and, though time cured his grief, it could not make him forget, and only twenty-four hours before his assassination in 1900 he was heard to speak mournfully of her tragic end.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE PRINCE AND THE FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTER

ONE bright September morning in the early nineties a young man went for a swim in the sea near Trieste and his swim was destined to have serious consequences. He was of good physique, though his weak face revealed traces of too easy living. No one in the little village knew who he was, for the name he gave—Johann Frier—conveyed nothing to the simple-minded folk who eked out a bare existence by fishing. Herr Frier was too reserved in manner at first to invite conversation, and the villagers only took an interest in him because he was a stranger and because he was so fond of the sea. They could not understand why any man not forced to work for his living should revel in long swims, and so they discussed Johann Frier and asked each other innumerable questions about him which no one was able to answer.

But the newcomer was in reality the Archduke Victor Francis, a second cousin of the Emperor of Austria, who was living in retirement because he incurred the animosity of his august relative by his extravagance and his defiance of the laws of the land.

The result was that Victor was banished from Vienna for a period of six months. The emperor

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

promised to make him a small allowance during that time, with a hint that if his conduct was irreproachable he would be allowed to dip his hands again in the imperial money-bags. Victor, unable to remain in the capital because of his creditors, had to accept the terms, and that was the reason why he took the name of Johann Frier and went off to enjoy what was for him a most unconventional holiday in an obscure fishing village.

He quickly became reconciled to his lot after he had made the acquaintance of the primitive people, who talked with charming ignorance of the Emperor Francis Joseph and the archdukes. They interested Victor, who heard opinions for the first time that gave him furiously to think, and in the mornings, when the men and women were too busy for talking, he went for lonely swims in the sea.

After a fortnight he came to the conclusion that the place lacked only one thing—a few pretty girls. So far he had not seen even one. Hard work seemed to age the peasants before their time. The young girls developed muscles like unto men's, and their costume was anything but picturesque.

On the morning referred to in the opening paragraph Victor was feeling in such fine fettle that he decided to break his record, and see what he could really accomplish in the way of a really long swim. He plunged in and struck out for the horizon, and with a song humming in his brain revelled in the glorious sun and the blue water. Life was the best of all gifts now. He had lost the gaieties of Vienna, but he had regained his health, and he would be a different man in future.

He was too confident, however, in his swimming powers, and he forgot as he went further and further away from the land that he was making the



## PRINCE AND FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTER

return more difficult. It was easy enough to utilise his strength on the outward journey, but what of the return? It was only when he started to go back that he realised that he had the hardest task of his life before him.

With set teeth he began the struggle. It was the remnants of his strength against the three miles between himself and safety, but every stroke he took perceptibly weakened him, and he was a long way off when, with a groan, he knew that it was beyond his powers. In vain did he look round for a boat or a fishing smack. There was nothing in sight except the distant shore.

He grew weaker and weaker. He could scarcely see, and a peculiar weariness overtook him. A minute later he sank, but, with a despairing effort, he got his head above the water again. A second time he collapsed, and death seemed only a question of moments, when suddenly a clear voice rang out and a hand clutched him by the arm. The touch revived him. He caught a glimpse of the black side of a boat; then a pretty face, clouded by fear, and, as he was climbing into the boat, assisted by his rescuer, he thought he must be dreaming. For nearly a minute he could not speak, staring all the time at the slim figure of the pretty girl, who looked adorable in a fisherman's oilskins.

"Who—who are you?" he gasped, fascinated by the light in her blue eyes.

"I am the daughter of Lisch, the boatman," she said simply. "I was watching you all the time you were in the sea, and I guessed when you were nearly out of sight that you'd have difficulty in getting back, so I got the boat out and came after you."

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

"You saved my life," he said, in a voice glowing with feeling. "I would have been drowned if you had not come."

The girl laughed merrily.

"Well, you're all right now," she said, with a delicious recklessness that thrilled him, "but if you want to get dry quickly you'd better take that other oar and help me to row. It'll keep you warm until you reach land."

He obeyed her at once, and for some minutes the spectacle was witnessed of the archduke and the boatman's daughter rowing towards land. Victor sat behind her, and marvelled at the power in her slim arms. He was clumsiness itself compared with her, and once he became so interested in her graceful movements that he fell into a reverie, and she had to remind him that she needed his help.

Fortunately there were only a few children playing on the shore when the boat touched land. Victor, who dearly wanted to chat with his rescuer, was told by her to run along, get dry, and change. He could not find words to express his feelings, and his one consolation was the thought that he would have no difficulty in seeing her again.

The moment he was dressed he walked down to the boat-house, and there came upon Marie Lisch busy cleaning. She looked up at him with a smile.

"You'll know better next time," she said flipantly. "Lots of swimmers think they can go on for ever."

"I owe you my life," he murmured, and for once in his life the archduke did not feel at ease in a pretty girl's presence.

"You owe my father a crown," she said, laughing. "That's what he always charges when he rescues a swimmer in difficulties."

## PRINCE AND FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTER

Victor produced a gold coin.

"I hope he will honour me by accepting this," he said in a whisper. Something told him that it would be wise not to make too large a present. Marie took it, and put it in her pocket.

"You are very kind," she said calmly. You see, she was a boatman's daughter, and she regarded Victor as only a little above her own class. She had been brought up in poverty, and money was always very scarce, and, therefore, very desirable. But had she known the rank of the handsome young man she would not have taken his obvious admiration so indifferently.

Victor was good-looking, and Marie was pretty, and it was only natural that she should accept an invitation from him to go for a walk along the shore. They were both young enough to be romantic, and when Victor expressed his gratitude in language which struck her as poetical she was deeply moved. That he was a gentleman she had no doubt now. Her artless questions had elicited the information that he did not work for his living, and that he was in the habit of dining in the best restaurants in Vienna. Marie had not had a good education, for she had helped to keep herself since she had been twelve, but she was quick-witted and intelligent, and Victor found her society delightful.

Their walks became frequent, and very soon the villagers were discussing Marie Lisch's latest conquest. She was greatly envied, because "Johann Frier" was plainly a man of means, and if he married her she would not have to work any more. They concluded that he had about two hundred pounds a year, which, translated into Austrian money, struck them as being an immense fortune.

They decided that Marie was to become a lady

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

and live in a big town, and for the rest of her life she would have nothing to do. The village discussed them freely, and it often happened that when Victor and Marie thought themselves alone half a dozen of her friends were watching them with distended eyes.

It was not long ere they were lovers. Marie could not resist the gentle wooing of the man whose life she had saved. She persuaded herself that she loved him and that marriage was the only possible conclusion to an acquaintance which had begun so romantically. She would be "Frau Johann Frier," and a "real lady."

They were engaged in a fortnight, and the old boatman did not hesitate to give his approval, although he had some misgivings about a certain village lad who had been keen on Marie, and who would have married her had he not been called to serve in the army. It had been understood that Marie was to wait for him, but she appeared to have forgotten all about him since "Herr Frier" had come into her life.

Victor went to Vienna, and saw Francis Joseph at the Hofburg, but at the last moment changed his mind, and did not refer to Marie Lisch. The old monarch was pleased to notice the improvement in his manners and health, and Victor was very deferential to him, being animated by a hope that his repentance would aid him when he came again to appeal to his majesty to sanction his morganatic marriage with the boatman's daughter.

Several archdukes had already wedded women of obscure birth, and why shouldn't he? He was not heir to the throne, and had greater freedom and less responsibility than most of the other archdukes. He was devoted to Marie Lisch, and even the

## PRINCE AND FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTER

renewal of his acquaintance with the fashionably-dressed beauties of the Austrian capital did not affect his admiration for the village belle.

On his return his first act was to ask her to name the day. She fixed upon one exactly six weeks ahead, and he agreed. Then came her father to remind him that he must give due notice at the Town Hall in Trieste, where the civil ceremony would take place before the religious one.

Victor now saw that he must take his sweetheart into his confidence; yet because he was very much in love with her he hesitated. He could not imagine her agreeing to live in a gorgeous palace in Vienna, and he knew that she would be terrified at the prospect.

He waited until one evening when they were standing on the shore together gazing out at sea. Then he startled her by asking if she would cease to love him if he proved not to be what she thought he was. With an exclamation of fear she half-turned her head and stared at him. For one long moment she thought he must have done something terrible, and she recalled the fact that there were evil-minded persons in the village who had hazarded the opinion that Johann Frier was a criminal of good birth who was in hiding.

Victor saw her fear in her eyes, and tried to laugh it away.

"I am not really bad," he said, putting his arm through hers. "It is not a criminal offence to be an archduke, is it?"

She thought he was joking, and burst into a rippling laugh.

"I am the Archduke Victor Francis," he said quietly, watching her closely.

She started again, and drew away from him.

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

"Are you serious?" she whispered, with dread in her voice.

In an instant he had her in his arms and had crushed her to his breast.

"Yes, I am an archduke," he said passionately, "but I love you all the same, Marie. You won't give me up, will you? Don't be afraid. I will obtain the emperor's permission. Many of my relatives have married morganatically with success. I will take you away to a beautiful house in the country. We shall live only for one another. We'll not be bothered by court etiquette. I shall watch tenderly over you, and you'll never have a moment's unhappiness."

But she scarcely heard his outburst. Her brain was throbbing with the words, "An Austrian archduke!" and she pressed her hands to her forehead to try and drive away the pain. He fell back from her, and stood as though awaiting sentence.

Marie had loved Johann Frier. Could she love His Imperial Highness the Archduke Victor Francis?

"Won't you speak," he asked her, in an anxious tone. But she was still dazed, and there were sorrow and fear in her eyes. Her lover had suddenly left her, and, in his place, was a royal prince.

It was never the same again, although Victor tried his hardest to convince her that there was nothing of which to be afraid. Marie could not reconcile herself to the idea of becoming the morganatic wife of a prince. Victor implored her not to break his heart. He went down on his knees and swore that he would make it right for her.

"My cousin, the emperor, will be your friend,

## PRINCE AND FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTER

too," he said, more than once. "Have no fear, Marie."

When that night the old boatman heard his daughter sobbing in her room, he thought that she had had a quarrel with her rich lover, but, in the morning, when he questioned her, she assured him that he was mistaken. She was very pale though she went with him to the boathouse, where she worked hard until midday. Then Victor came along and took her for a walk. She returned from it grief-stricken, and the archduke looked very miserable, too, as he left her.

That he loved her there could be no doubt, and it struck a chill into his heart whenever he thought that she might not marry him after all. She was necessary to his existence. No other girl could ever inspire such feeling in him. He wanted Marie Lisch, and for her sake he was willing to sacrifice every one of his worldly advantages.

The girl herself lived as if in a dream. She was ever very gentle and affectionate, and she made pathetic attempts to be her old self again, but she never quite succeeded and Victor knew this to his sorrow. He hoped for the best, however, and when he announced that he intended to go to Vienna and obtain his uncle's consent, she offered no opposition.

"When you see his approval written in his own hand you will lose your fears," said the archduke, with a fruitless attempt at enthusiasm. "You won't forget me while I am away, will you?" he added, with a smile, but his eyes were moist.

An hour after his arrival in Vienna he was in the Hofburg, and the Emperor Francis Joseph was listening with unmistakable hostility to his rambling

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

request to be allowed to marry the boatman's daughter.

"Marie saved my life," he repeated several times. "She is lovely and good, and will make me happy. If you consent——"

"I will never sanction such a marriage," said the emperor, in a shrill voice. "You are crazy, Victor. Morganatic marriages are making the Hapsburgs the laughing-stock of the world. Go home and be sensible. Reward this village beauty with money. Don't ruin your career. On your own showing she is ignorant, and I wouldn't tolerate her in the family for a moment."

From pleading Victor passed to threats, and he announced that he would defy the emperor. Marie should be his wife even if the whole world opposed. Francis Joseph called him a fool, and threatened to have him imprisoned.

"You daren't commit that outrage," shouted Victor, forgetting himself altogether. "If you did, the day I was released I'd shoot you."

The infuriated emperor rang a bell, and Katti Schratt, who later was to be his own morganatic wife, appeared. She summoned the attendants, and, for appearance's sake, the archduke was forced to take a respectful farewell of his uncle, but he determined to remain a few days longer in Vienna and see if he could bring some influence to bear on the obstinate old man.

He spent a week vainly endeavouring to win the consent of his Sovereign, which was most important, because if he married without it he would be deprived of his revenues, which were being managed by trustees, who were paying off his debts and husbanding his resources, but Francis Joseph was implacable and immovable, and the time came



## PRINCE AND FISHERMAN'S DAUGHTER

when the Archduke Victor decided that he would surrender his rank and fortune, and wed Marie Lisch.

Among his friends was a priest, who, when approached, consented to perform the ceremony, and he took him to Trieste and left him to wait at a certain hotel while he went to fetch Marie.

It was a cold, dry morning when he walked from the station towards the little cottage where Marie lived. On his way he overtook a procession, the leader carrying a flag, and he stood on one side to watch it pass by. Then, to his amazement, he saw that the central attraction was Marie Lisch gaily dressed, while by her side was a young man, whose expression of conscious triumph proved that something important had happened.

"What's the procession for?" he asked a stout woman who was regarding the crowd with a sympathetic smile. She recognised him at once.

"Ah, Herr Frier, it is young Marie Lisch, the boatman's daughter. She was married this morning to young Joseph Kawalski, her sweetheart. They were engaged for three years, and he only returned home two days ago after having served his time in the army."

When he heard the fateful news, Victor had difficulty in maintaining his composure. Everything was blotted out, and he staggered. He recovered quickly, however, and with a heavy heart turned back towards the station. When he walked into the hotel where the priest was staying to marry him to Marie Lisch, he simply told him that he had no use for his services.

He did not seek an interview with Marie. Had he done so he might have learnt that the emperor's secret police had something to do with her hasty

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

wedding, for one of them had interviewed her, and having elicited the fact that she had once been engaged to a man of her own class, he told her that if she wished to pass the rest of her life outside prison walls, she had better marry her old sweetheart at once. The boatman's daughter was not slow to obey. Hence the wedding and the procession, and the fact that Victor Francis returned to Vienna with a broken heart. He died seven years later a bachelor, and on his deathbed he held a photograph of his first love tightly clenched in his hands.

## THE KING AND THE DANCER

---

immediately, "and you shall choose where to sup with me."

He was wise in leaving the choice to her, and an hour later Milan was beaming with pride as he steered the beauty through a crowd of obsequious waiters to the room placed at their disposal. That dinner was a merry one, and towards midnight Milan, overcome by wine, began to sing at the top of his voice, greatly to the disgust of Rosa Subra, who, though a public dancer, had her own ideas of propriety.

But it was not until the following midday that Milan realised that he had made a mistake, for when he called at Rosa's flat he was informed by her maid that she refused to see him.

"Mademoiselle says that you disgraced yourself last night," the servant told him. "You are not to come here again."

The king was astounded. He had looked for an easy conquest. Rosa was of humble birth; he could make her rich and give her an assured social position, and here she was treating him like dirt.

He walked away in a fury, determined never to see her again. There were other dancers in Paris, and beauty was to be met with everywhere. He would make Rosa jealous by taking up with one of her rivals.

For three days he kept away from her, and every moment of that time seemed an eternity. Her pert treatment of himself, her independence, her sharp and clever tongue, and her lovely face and figure were too much for him. Other beauties annoyed him by their chatter and their flattery. Rosa was the first girl to treat him as a human being, and Milan's heart was very human indeed.

On the fourth day he went to the music hall

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

where she was performing, and waited behind the scenes with the manager. She was nearly an hour late, but Milan was so pleased to see her that he forgot his annoyance and went towards her eagerly with outstretched hand.

"Ah, there you are!" she cried, her face lighting up. "Well, I suppose I'll have to forgive you. But now you must go round in front and see my show. I am giving two new dances. When I have done you can take me out to supper again. No one can say that I bear anyone malice."

Her manner in addressing Milan shocked the manager, who would have reproved her, but the king intervened.

"I am content," he said, and went to his seat in the stalls.

She had scarcely returned to her dressing-room when he was knocking at the door, and when he was admitted he began to apologise for his drunken behaviour at the restaurant.

"That's all right," said Rosa, as she proceeded to remove her make-up. "I've decided to give you another chance."

He would have preferred her to be more generous, but she was a Queen of Beauty and a tyrant so far as her subjects were concerned. Milan humbly escorted her to another restaurant, and on this occasion his behaviour was irreproachable. Rosa congratulated him on the improvement.

"I can show you to my friends now," she told him, greatly to his surprise and wonderment. "It'll make some of them jealous when I trot you round."

It was the last thing in the world that he desired. He did not wish to be led out for inspection by

## THE KING AND THE DANCER

---

Rosa's theatrical friends and rivals; but again he submitted, because he had fallen in love with her, and he could not bear to let her out of his sight. She was so entirely different from all the other women he knew. Her laughing impertinences were a new sensation to a man who had been brought up amongst parasites and flatterers. Rosa treated him as a man and she constantly made fun of those obsequious persons who seemed overcome when presented to him.

For some weeks Milan and Rosa frequented the restaurants together, and it became generally known in Paris that the famous dancer's latest conquest was a king. She became the most-talked-of artiste in France, and the places they honoured with their patronage were always packed by curious people who wished to see the monarch and the dancer dine in public. Rosa, ever shrewd and on the look-out for a chance to turn an honest penny, used to take a commission from the restaurant proprietors to whose establishments she introduced Milan.

But what surprised the king most was the girl's silence on the subject of their friendship. She never spoke of her feelings towards him, and when he hinted at the possibility of a secret marriage she merely laughed and changed the subject. She was not in love with him, and so far he had not dared to admit to anyone, least of all Rosa herself, that she was his ideal, and that she must be his partner for life.

Rosa was just a devotee of pleasure. She danced for money, and money only; working hard because she had expensive tastes. Her flat was a perfect dream, and her clothes the wonder and envy of her friends. Milan followed her about like a

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

tame dog, worried occasionally by remonstrances from his ministers, who pointed out to him that he was endangering the dynasty, and that if he persisted in his conduct it might cost him his throne.

But in those days the fire of life burned warmly in Milan's veins. To him Paris was an earthly paradise, and Rosa Subra, dancer, the most perfect creature in the world. He worshipped her dumbly—an astonishing fact because Milan's methods of love-making were usually tempestuous. But he was in earnest this time, and Rosa's independence warned him to be careful; for he realised that if he offended her again she must banish him from her side.

He ought to have returned to his own country, but he lingered on in Paris, dancing attendance on the pert beauty. She was wont to laugh at his love-lorn condition, and chaff him about his forlorn appearance whenever she spoke familiarly to anyone else.

"You do look silly, Milan!" she said, saucily, and he wanted to be angry with her, but could not.

"I can't help myself," he answered miserably. "I'm being worried to death by my so-called advisers. They think I'm neglecting my work."

"Of course you are," she retorted briskly. "Why don't you go home and earn your keep? Perhaps one of these days I'll accept an engagement in Belgrade, though it would be terrible to have to leave Paris."

"I can't go unless you come with me," he said in a whisper. She stared at him for a few minutes, suddenly serious.

"I never thought of that," she said simply. "But, then, I've never thought of marriage either."

"I will make you a queen, Rosa," he said pas-

## THE KING AND THE DANCER

---

sionately. "My people would accept you. I don't come of such a great family myself. It's not long since my ancestors were mere peasants."

"Come to my flat to-night and we'll talk about it," she said. But there was not the right ring in her voice; Rosa Subra was not to be swayed by love—only by ambition.

We can only guess what happened during that interview. But years afterwards the fact was revealed that the king pledged his word to marry Rosa Subra by a certain date. He was deeply in love with her, and he showered presents upon her until she had one of the largest collections of jewels in Paris, and Milan had the largest collection of debts. When the secret engagement was ratified he went back to Belgrade, and for three long months kept his nose to the grindstone. Rosa, perfectly indifferent to his existence, found other friends and all she wanted in the applause of her well-wishers, the music-hall frequenters of the French capital. It was understood that, owing to a defective education, she did not often indulge in letter-writing; and thus, whilst Milan sent her a letter a day, her only response was an occasional acknowledgment in a handwriting that looked suspiciously like that of her maid's. But Milan kept them in his pocket, and never permitted anybody to see them.

At the earliest opportunity he returned to her, to find that she had grown even more beautiful and desirable. He had not yet, however, removed the difficulties that stood between them and marriage; but Rosa was quite content to wait. She wanted to become a queen; but whenever she thought of leaving her beloved France she became depressed.

They had a good time together, and when Milan's

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

funds were exhausted she allowed him to borrow on her jewellery. She had plenty, quite apart from his presents, and, in fact, it was she who paid for the expenses of a gay two months by the sale of part of her diamonds. Milan, who lived only for the moment, viewed his rivals' presents with indifference, fully persuaded that Rosa was his, and that she never seriously thought of the others.

Perhaps if Rosa had not been making such rapid progress in her profession, she would have been eager for an early marriage. But she was greedy of applause, and she adored the theatre. It had brought her fame and fortune and a king for a lover, and her weekly receptions at her flat were attended by some of the most famous persons in Paris.

Of course, she made the most of her friendship with Milan, and he was a source of considerable income to her. Managers who had hitherto paid her thirty pounds a week now offered her double, because they knew that she would attract bigger audiences because of her well-known friendship with the king. Sweet are the uses of advertisement, and Rosa, who was a sort of Cockney Parisian, ever had her eye on the main chance.

Milan's devotion to her was, however, inspired by a genuine affection. Otherwise he would not have been able to put up with her impertinences, her cavalier treatment of him, and her habit of exhibiting him to her friends as a sort of tame animal. In later years Paris was to know a great deal more of Milan as an exile; but in the days when Rosa Subra was his sweetheart his sole claim on fame was the fact that the famous dancer had shown him more favour than she accorded to anyone else.



## THE KING AND THE DANCER

---

The course of their love did not indicate durability. Milan had to go to Belgrade very often, and as he was in the habit of returning without giving warning, he generally found cause for jealousy. Rosa lived a Bohemian life, and her friends were as unconventional as herself; but whenever Milan stormed and raved and threatened, she had merely to order him to leave her and not to see her again for him to fall on his knees and beg forgiveness.

Then there was the financial question. Love could not prevent Milan being extravagant. He had been hampered by his debts when in his teens, and now he owed a fabulous amount. Because Rosa was Bohemian she saw nothing strange in the fact that he borrowed from her.

No doubt, as he was a king, she believed he was good enough for any amount, and that was her main reason for placing her private fortune at his disposal. Once she saved him from an awkward position by lending him five thousand pounds, for which he promised to pay her twenty thousand, and Rosa did not imagine for a moment that he would fail her. But Milan gave no thought for the morrow. He was out to enjoy himself, and, believing that she was devoted to him, he let the days slip by in indolence and ease. Nasty rumours reached him from Belgrade. There were enemies of his who wanted to deprive him of his kingdom. He laughed when Rosa mentioned them, unaware that if his love was genuine she had only consented to marry him because she wished to wear a crown. Had Milan lost it, she would have thrown him aside without a single regret.

Rosa nightly danced her way into the hearts of the impressionable Parisians, with her kingly lover

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

seated in a darkened box watching her greedily, proud that she was so popular, and yet resenting the familiarity of her admirers and her evident enjoyment in their applause. Of course, they called her by her Christian name, a sure sign of popularity, but Milan considered that it was his sole right to use it.

The engagement was about six months old when he began to urge on the girl the advisability of retiring from the stage. She laughed at the idea, and angrily told him not to be a fool. He was driven into an angry retort, and a quarrel ensued, ending in the usual way, Milan apologising, and Rosa remaining sulky until she condescended to express her pardon. At this time Milan's position was worse than ever it had been. He had not only taken back all the jewellery he had given Rosa, but in addition had borrowed over ten thousand pounds from her, and he was quite insolvent, with very little prospect of ever getting financially straight again.

The position became strained. No reassuring news ever came from Belgrade, where his foes appeared to be gaining strength and his slighted supporters were growing weaker. He wrote for money, and was answered with promises, and at last Rosa became aware of the real state of affairs.

She had lent him money because he had promised phenomenal interest, and she fancied that when she was his wife she would have complete possession of the Serbian Crown jewels, ignorant of the fact that there were none in existence. But Milan had to lie to prevent her becoming suspicious, and it was not until a friend explained the king's actual condition that she awoke to a realisation of the facts.

## THE KING AND THE DANCER

---

The prospective loss of a throne did not annoy her half as much as the feeling that she would be unable to recover the twelve thousand five hundred pounds—the actual sum—which her lover had borrowed from her. She went to an authority on European politics, who confirmed what her friend had said. Then she sent a curt note to Milan, requesting him to come to her flat at once.

Quite unconscious of the impending storm, the king appeared, full of loving words and smiling happily, and he was not dismayed when he saw Rosa's tight lips and the hard expression in her eyes.

"What is the matter, my dear?" he asked, but his question was answered in a torrent of words, mainly invective, which took her ten minutes to deliver.

She called him a swindler, demanded her money back, scornfully rejected further promises, and declared that unless he appeared with the cash within twenty-four hours she would publicly sue him. Milan tried to interject a sentence here and there, but she frightened him into silence, and it was not until anger had exhausted her that he spoke.

The king was a master of the smooth phrase; but Rosa loved hard cash too dearly to be bamboozled again, and now he knew that he had killed whatever affection she had had for him once. He still loved her, but there was no misunderstanding her actual feelings.

She was as good as her word, and with astonishing promptness had a writ served on him, and the case came before a Paris court. There was no defence, for Milan's passionate love-letters, as well as his numerous acknowledgments of his indebted-

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

ness, proved Rosa's case, and she was awarded £12,500 against her old lover.

But Milan had not entirely abandoned his ambition to make Rosa his wife. He imagined that if his ministers paid her the money she would forgive him, and agree to start all over again. He remained, therefore, in Paris while the action was being heard, and when the dancer's lawyers asked him to satisfy the judgment, he referred them to the Treasury at Belgrade. The Serbian Government, however, had no money to spare. They had already paid out too much on Milan's account. Thousands of pounds had gone to satisfy the demands of money-lenders and tradesmen in Vienna, Paris, and Berlin, and they considered it discreet to call a halt. The king was informed that he must find the cash himself.

He had expected a different answer, and when he realised that he had taken the pitcher to the well too often, he packed up his bag and decamped from Paris by night, only in time to avoid another visit from Rosa Subra's lawyer, a ferrety-looking man, who had expressed a determination to get Milan into a debtors' prison if he did not pay up.

From the safety of a Vienna hotel Milan wrote to Rosa, asking her to join him, promising immediate marriage. She replied with a letter packed with expressions of contempt, and winding up with a threat that if ever he showed his face again in Paris he would have cause to regret it. Milan never wrote her again, and a year afterwards he read in a French paper that she had married a Russian millionaire and had gone to live in the land of the czar.

## CHAPTER XI

### A RUSSIAN LOVE TRAGEDY

It was not often that a Russian grand duke was associated with a genuine love romance. Even when he married morganatically he was generally inspired by feelings other than real regard, but the romance of the Grand Duke Alexis was absolutely unique.

Alexis was a cousin of the czar, and some years his senior, and when only twenty he incurred the enmity of his family by declining to marry a German princess, who had been picked out for him by the czar and the kaiser.

Alexis was in the mid-thirties when he paid that memorable visit to his uncle, the late Grand Duke Alexandrovitch. At that time he was tall and strong, good-looking, with an amiable expression, enhanced by clear, blue eyes. Like most of the Romanoffs, his personal appearance was in his favour, and there was more than one Russian royal princess who admired him in secret. Alexis, however, was polite and courteous, but nothing more, and they failed to do more than hold his interest for an hour or two. Alexis knew that it was his money and position they were after, and he was heart-whole when on that day he turned up at the magnificent palace of his uncle in the Russian capital.

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

The Grand Duke Alexis was always bored by his relatives, who openly sneered at his peculiar tastes, and expressed amazement that a man with more money than he could spend should care more for learning than for the pleasures of the table and the theatre. Alexis smilingly assured them that there was more in books than they imagined, and he pleasantly requested them not to worry over his "eccentricities." They tried occasionally to bring him round to their way of thinking, but, of course, never had the slightest chance of success.

With the people, however, Alexis stood high. They regarded him as the best of the Romanoffs, and it was popularly said at the time that had Russia been a republic he would have been elected president. He was a man the people could trust. They knew that his estate was a model one, and that no landowner treated his tenants and servants better than he did.

In the days when the grand duke was young and an idealist, the czar's power was absolute, and only a lunatic would have dreamt of revolution. Alexis was of opinion that czardom was necessary for Russia, but it is to his credit that he deplored the tendency of the Romanoffs to marry into German families.

Alexis arrived at his uncle's house for a stay of three days. It was for him a dismal prospect, because he knew that he would have to associate with persons whom he detested. His uncle was good enough to place his library at his disposal, and Alexis often had to tear himself away from the books, don a gorgeous uniform, and take part in a banquet with the czar as the chief guest. It was distasteful, but he had to do his duty, fortified by

## A RUSSIAN LOVE TRAGEDY

---

the knowledge that his ordeal would be over in three days' time.

Yet Alexis remained a fortnight, and the cause for the prolongation of his visit was not the Grand Duke Alexandrovitch's magnificent library, but a girl he happened to meet there on the morning he had looked forward to as the last he would have to spend in the capital.

It was the prince's rule to go to the library immediately after breakfast, and remain there a couple of hours at least. On this particular morning he entered as usual in his hurried, nervous manner, and he had gone straight to a certain book-case before he was aware, by a startled exclamation, that he was not alone. Turning his head he saw a girl of about twenty-five, of medium height, rosy complexion, and startled, dark eyes. With his natural courtesy the grand duke hastened to apologise for having frightened her.

"Oh, no, your Imperial Highness," said the girl, in a musical voice, and, with another enchanting change of colour, "it is my own fault, and I am sorry. I was told not to enter here during your stay, but I didn't expect you so soon, and I came to get a book for one of my pupils."

Alexis was deeply interested.

"You know who I am," he said, with a smile, "but I have no idea of your identity. Perhaps you will enlighten me."

"My name is Victorine Duplay," said the girl, nervously, "and I am employed by Count Sergius Naumonoff, his imperial highness's secretary, to instruct his children."

The prince bowed.

"I am delighted to make your acquaintance, mademoiselle," he said, with a depth of feeling

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

that surprised even himself. "I am a great admirer of the French nation. Will you let me see the book you are holding?"

From that time it was easy to pass on to speak of her native land, and the time slipped by before Victorine realised that her pupils were waiting for her. With a fascinating little cry of penitence she hurried towards the door.

"Your Imperial Highness must excuse me," she said anxiously, "but the children are waiting."

She was gone before he could think of an excuse for detaining her, and although he remained in the palace until dinner-time he did not see her again that day.

But he astonished his uncle by asking permission to remain a few days longer.

"I have not completed my examination of your library," he said, but his thoughts were not of books. They centred exclusively on a dark-haired girl with a lovely face and a perfect figure.

The Grand Duke Alexandrovitch laughingly consented.

"I find the library the dullest room in the palace," he said, not without a trace of contempt in his voice. "I'm fonder of the drawing-room, for there you have a chance of meeting a pretty girl."

Alexis flushed slightly. He knew that pretty girls were to be met with in unexpected places, and that the prettiest of them all had just been found by him in his uncle's despised library.

His luck was in, for the following morning he came upon Victorine again. This time he engaged her in a long conversation, and with that marvellous faculty for adapting themselves to circumstances which the French possess, Victorine



## A RUSSIAN LOVE TRAGEDY

---

entered into the spirit of the occasion and proved to the prince that she knew a great deal about books too.

Then, emboldened by his interest, she began to talk to him of France and of her people. Her father had been a leading barrister in Paris, but on his death had left very little money, and Victorine, who had received a first-class education, was now earning a large salary in a Russian household.

"Are you happy?" said Alexis, who envied her musical laugh, perfect health, and good spirits.

"Yes, except when I think of my mother in Paris," she answered softly. "She is alone, but I am saving, monsieur, and one day I will go back to her and take her into the country, and mother will be very happy there."

"I have not been in France for two years," he confessed, in answer to a question. "How I wish, mademoiselle, that I had you to act as my guide. You make France live when you speak of her."

Victorine laughed and blushed, accepting the compliment naturally, for she was only a governess and he was a prince of the blood royal, and there could be no harm in anything he said to her. In a short time she would go out of his life for ever, and he would marry and never think of her again. So Victorine, with her capacity for enjoyment, talked and laughed and showed her appreciation of his well-bred flattery by displaying two rows of perfect teeth.

When, however, she was in her own room, she sank into an armchair and let her thoughts run wild. Alexis was a handsome man, clever, learned, and yet very human. She had been told that he was eccentric. "He is a perfect gentleman," said

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

Victorine to herself, "and I hope that if I ever fall in love it will be with a man like him."

She would not confess to herself that she had fallen in love already. The Grand Duke Alexis had come into her life at a critical moment. Her duties as governess to the count's motherless children had grown irksome. The children were not exactly good-tempered, and she was homesick. She had not met many men in the Grand Duke Alexandrovitch's house, but the majority had paid her compliments which seemed to her refined mind like insults. Alexis was the first to treat her with the deference that a French gentleman would have paid her.

It was with a guilty start that she heard the count tell her that his master's nephew was going to stay on indefinitely. "He appears to have been hypnotised by the library," he said, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I can't understand why. The books are old and uninteresting, but then His Imperial Highness is so eccentric."

Was he remaining in the palace on her account? Victorine, when alone, involuntarily asked the question, and then censured herself for a forward minx. But she was glad and happy. The dull old mansion seemed to have become a fairyland, and now she ceased to wish that she could catch the next train to Paris.

When Victorine came to the decision that she must see Alexis again she had no difficulty in finding a way. There was always the library, and between breakfast and lunch Alexis was sure to be there.

She was never disappointed, and day after day they met and chatted freely without any ceremony. Sometimes they went into the wonderful gardens,

## A RUSSIAN LOVE TRAGEDY

---

where Victorine would explain the flowers to the prince, and he would listen as if in a dream, both half-conscious of the fact that they were drifting towards an impossible position.

And it was in the garden that he told her that he loved her, and there she was carried away by her feelings and whispered that she was his for ever. It did not matter to her that there would be formidable forces arrayed against them and that the court would intrigue to part them. It did not occur to her that her life might be endangered if she persisted in clinging to her lover in face of his relatives' opposition.

She was in love, and nothing else mattered, and as they walked amongst the flowers life seemed perfect. Alexis was in the seventh heaven of delight too. Love was something new and wonderful to him.

Of course his partiality for the French governess's society had been commented upon by the servants, and the girl's employer half-jokingly mentioned it to the Grand Duke Alexandrovitch, who expressed himself pleased at the prospect of his nephew becoming human.

"She will wake him up," said the grand duke, with a good-humoured smile, "and perhaps we shall hear less about his books now."

In one respect he was right. Alexis was no longer a bookworm. He became a lover of the open air because Victorine was, and both went for long walks into the country, where, free from interruption, they talked without restraint.

For several weeks the course of true love ran smoothly. Victorine was treated courteously, and the Grand Duke Alexandrovitch was kindness itself to her. She had always liked the Russians,

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

and it was only the German residents whom she detested. It was unfortunate that the Germans had obtained a footing in the royal palace and that the princes were crazy about them, but in her present employment Victorine did not often come into contact with them, and she had no cause for complaint while in the service of the grand duke's private secretary.

Of course, all her thoughts were concerned with her secret engagement to Alexis; for she was looking forward to living many happy and prosperous years with him in his lovely country mansion. On the face of it there could be no objection to her becoming his wife. Other relatives of the czar had married girls who had been born and bred in the gutter, and who were ignorant and ill-mannered. She was an educated lady of good lineage, and she was in every respect fitted to preside over the prince's household.

But if she was confident, Alexis was not. He knew that his cousin, the czar, was under the influence of his German wife, and that she would head the opposition to his union with Victorine. He was fearless on his own account, but he shuddered at the thought of the persecution his sweetheart would be exposed to. Nevertheless, he hoped for the best.

The state of secrecy could not be maintained forever, and the day came when the Grand Duke Alexandrovitch was astounded by his nephew informing him that he meant to marry Victorine Duplay. A horrified "Are you mad?" was all the older man said before he drove to the royal palace to impart the terrible tidings to the czar.

It created a sensation. Grand dukes had married chorus girls and the daughters of working men, but

## A RUSSIAN LOVE TRAGEDY

---

the idea of one of them wedding a decent girl of education and family was incomprehensible. The czar told his wife, and she immediately took the field against Victorine, though the French governess was quite ignorant of her hostility to the very end.

The Empress of Russia could not forget that she was a German, and she acted towards Victorine in true Hun fashion. Her first intention had been to order the girl's banishment, but she quickly understood that if she did that Alexis would simply follow her to Paris and marry her there. It was, therefore, necessary to discredit Victorine and make Alexis break his promise to marry her.

The grand duke, after having announced his engagement, naturally expected to be besieged by the protests of his relatives. His uncle certainly made an attempt to convince him that he was a fool, but after that never referred to the subject again. When a fortnight had passed, and, apparently, the members of the royal family were absorbed in their own affairs, Alexis decided that they must have agreed amongst themselves to do nothing to prevent the match, sensibly agreeing to let him alone. He told Victorine his opinion with such enthusiasm that she believed it, too.

This was just before he was due to return to his country residence, and it was with a lighter heart that he bade good-bye to his sweetheart, and whispered that he would return in a month to make her his wife. Victorine seemed to have grown more beautiful since he had learnt to love her, and she looked the loveliest girl in Petrograd in his eyes.

When he had gone she felt very lonely, and all of a sudden she divined the silent hostility that

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

surrounded her, though she never suspected the czarina. The Grand Duke Alexandrovitch might be outwardly polite, but there was an almost imperceptible hardening of the eyes and tightening of the lips whenever he saw her. The Count Sergius Naumonoff might pretend to be the same man as ever, but Victorine detected his strained manner. The day after her parting from Alexis she asked the count to permit her to resign at once and return to her mother in Paris. He protested that she was hasty, and finally induced her to wait a month until he could find a suitable successor.

That month was the last of Victorine Duplay's life.

It was half-way through when the count caused consternation in the palace by dramatically declaring that certain of his late wife's jewellery had been stolen. The value of the diamond necklace and rings was nearly nine thousand pounds, and, on the grand duke's instructions, guards were placed at every exit from the palace, whilst the rooms were subjected to a thorough search.

Victorine, with the other employees, was most sympathetic and quite willing to allow her trunks to be searched, and when the count and two manservants began the task in her room she stood by the window waiting patiently for them to conclude.

She was gazing at a procession in the street below when a sudden exclamation caused her to swing round. Then she saw the count taking a packet of tissue paper from one of his servants, and, simultaneously, she realised that it was wrapped round the missing necklace.

Never thinking for a moment that the finding of the stolen jewellery had any connection with her engagement to the Grand Duke Alexis, she wildly

## A RUSSIAN LOVE TRAGEDY

---

protested her innocence, swearing that she was the victim of a vile plot.

Count Sergius Naumonoff never spoke a word, but, when he and his servants left, Victorine heard the key turned in the lock, and knew that she was a prisoner. She was so agitated that she could not think clearly. Her only solution was that she had been the victim of a plot on the part of a servant, and yet she knew that she was liked by every one of them. There never had been a governess who gave them such little trouble.

The unhappy girl was silently sobbing when she felt a hand on her shoulder, and, looking up, beheld two members of the Russian secret police. She nearly fainted, and they had to half-carry her downstairs. In the street she collapsed altogether, and when she recovered consciousness she was lying on the floor of a damp and dark cell in the terrible prison ironically named after the saints, Peter and Paul.

In that same cell she was found dead seventeen days later, and forty-eight hours afterwards the Petrograd papers were informing the public that Victorine Duplay, governess in the family of the Count Sergius Naumonoff, had committed suicide in prison to avoid appearing before a tribunal to answer the charge of having stolen jewels to the value of nine thousand pounds from her employer.

It was a lie, and a cowardly lie at that, though the Petrograd press could not be blamed, for it was the Russian Government that gave out the information, and there can be no doubt that the whole plot was concocted by Sergius Naumonoff at the instigation of the ex-czarina. She knew that the only way to part Alexis and Victorine would be by death or dishonour. Her object was

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

to make it impossible for her husband's cousin to marry the French girl by bringing a vile charge against her.

When Alexis heard about it he immediately journeyed to Petrograd, and informed his relatives that he did not believe a word of the accusation. The czarina thereupon induced the czar to banish Alexis, adding a promise that if Victorine cleared her name opposition to her marriage would be withdrawn.

Well aware that the girl could easily prove her innocence, her death was resolved upon. Many an innocent prisoner has been strangled at dead of night by members of the secret police, and that was Victorine's fate. She was dozing fitfully when two hands clutched her by the throat, and the already weakened frame succumbed.

Alexis never entered Petrograd again. He was told the story that the papers printed, and, while he denied that Victorine had been a thief, he believed that she had taken her own life in despair. Five years later he died, too, having never thought of marriage again. The official announcement was "consumption," but an intimate friend who wrote about him shortly afterwards in the famous Paris journal, *Le Matin*, declared that the Grand Duke Alexis died of a broken heart.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE ELOPEMENT THAT FAILED

WHEN ex-Crown Princess Louisa ran away from her husband, now ex-King of Saxony, one of her bitterest enemies was the king's sister, Princess Matilda, a middle-aged virago, all teeth and nose, who went out of her way to blacken the character of her erring sister-in-law. Louisa and Matilda never met again, but, had they done so, it is impossible to imagine that the former would have failed to remind her of the occasion when, young and passing fair, she herself fled from the Saxon court, hoping to make a Dresden doctor her husband.

Princess Matilda's ugliness was proverbial in Germany, yet in her young days she was not without good looks, and, although brought up in an oppressive atmosphere, could be skittish. Matilda was taught to believe that she was semi-divine, and that all those not of royal birth were only a little better than animals. When she attained her sixteenth birthday she was given two companions whose duty it was to see that the princess did not commit any terrible indiscretions, such as speaking familiarly to the noblemen and others who came to the court.

In the circumstances it naturally followed that Matilda never had a poor opinion of herself. She once announced that she would not marry anyone

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

below the rank of a crown prince. As she was related to the Austrian emperor, she had hopes of Crown Prince Rudolph, but that fickle person treated her with scant courtesy on the one occasion they met, not hesitating to declare that she was a "fright." Matilda was of medium height, with a good figure, and regular features. Her eyes were a dull grey, and her hair a nondescript brown. She was certainly not a beauty, but she could be pleasing, and Rudolph's treatment of her was unmannerly. However, she was not discouraged. There were many other princes, and in course of time they came to Dresden or else Matilda and her parents paid them visits, but all to no purpose, and at thirty her royal highness was still a spinster and on the way to becoming an old maid.

So the dreary years went by, and Matilda became very unhappy. Two of her brothers and her younger sister married, while a third brother became a priest and urged Matilda to enter a nunnery. This was ridiculous advice to a woman who was wholly worldly, and even when she admitted to herself that she must abandon the idea of marriage, she would not dream of giving up the pomps and vanities of the court.

And then the one man who was to bring romance and real adventure came into her life, and in the most unexpected manner, too. Matilda was in the habit of taking long walks into the pretty country around Dresden. She had become a pedestrian by reason of the frequent quarrels that went on in her family. Most of its members were at loggerheads with one another, and often, in a temper, Matilda would seize a walking-stick and start off for a wayside inn six miles away.

One day she was trudging homewards covered

## THE ELOPEMENT THAT FAILED

---

with dust, and feeling intensely weary, for the June sun had shone with terrific force. She would not, however, give in, fearing that if she arrived home in a carriage she would be taunted by her relations.

But if the spirit was strong the flesh was weak, and, the exertion proving too much, she fainted. When she recovered consciousness she was reclining in a private carriage, and a strong, handsome face was bending anxiously into hers.

"Ah, you are better now," said Dr. Hugo Steintz, general practitioner of Dresden. "Madame, you have had a bad seizure, and I would advise you to be careful in future, and not overtax your strength."

For a few moments the princess did not answer. She was now feeling comfortable, and had quite recovered. Besides, the stranger's eyes fascinated her, and it was delicious to know that he was unaware of her identity. She closed her own eyes when she spoke.

"I am deeply grateful to you," she murmured gently. "Will you tell me your name?"

"I am Dr. Steintz," he said respectfully, for he guessed that she was an aristocrat, and, as he had just begun his practice, he needed all the influential patronage he could get.

"Dr. Steintz," she repeated slowly. "Thank you; I will remember."

"Meanwhile, if you will permit me to drive you home I'll give directions to my coachman," he said, and, stepping out, closed the door.

Matilda hesitated. She was not too old to enjoy a romance, and this was the first she had ever experienced. It appealed to her strongly, all the more because the doctor did not know she was the daughter of his king. His tall and supple figure, intellectual face, and his youth killed at once her

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

old ideas about the inequality of royals and non-royals, and the absurdity of love.

"I have walked nine miles since lunch-time," she said, irrelevantly, anxious to detain him. Steintz glanced at her.

"If I may be allowed to speak as a doctor, I would advise you not to attempt such a feat again," he said, gravely. "You have been too delicately nurtured to be able to walk long distances."

"It was fortunate for me that you were passing, and saw me stretched on the road," she remarked, and shuddered as she added, "Suppose I had been run over, wouldn't it have been terrible?"

"Terrible, indeed," said the doctor, with a slight smile; "but, as you have escaped, perhaps it would be better not to worry about what might have been. You should now drive straight home and lie down. In fact, it would do you no harm to stay in bed for a day or two."

She was enchanted by his voice, which was soft and alluring. The motley crowd of degenerates that formed the Saxon court had disgusted the princess, who worshipped strength. Nearly all her relatives were on diets, and their querulous attitude towards life made the palace a sort of aristocratic sanatorium instead of a home. She was mentally comparing Hugo Steintz with them while he was speaking, and she found herself actually dreading the time when self-respect would compel her to leave him.

Suddenly the coachman turned and addressed his employer.

"I have to remind you, Herr Doctor," he said, "that you have to make several calls before dinner." Steintz nodded to his servant, and inwardly wished that his practice justified the state-

## THE ELOPEMENT THAT FAILED

ment, but the old man was devoted to him, and had uttered the lie to impress the strange lady. Matilda was taken in by it, and she resolved to make inquiries at the palace concerning the busy young practitioner.

The coachman's hint was not to be ignored, however, and reluctantly Matilda offered her hand to Steintz.

"Good-bye, doctor," she said, sweetly, "I am very grateful. Please order your coachman to drive to the royal palace. I am the Princess Matilda." She noted with glee his startled expression, but a moment later he was standing back in the roadway with his hat off, and the carriage was rapidly disappearing.

It was a crucial moment in Matilda's life, and when Hugo Steintz met her she was ripe for a romance. Existence had become almost unendurable. Now that she knew there was a handsome young doctor in Dresden who, she was certain, did not find her repulsive, she quickly dubbed him her knight-errant sent by Providence to rescue her from her gilded prison. He might be a commoner and a thousand degrees removed from the throne, but he was a gentleman, and men of his type were scarce enough in the circles in which she moved.

With a graciousness, hitherto quite foreign to her, Matilda thanked the coachman and gave him a gold coin, two acts which made the fellow her most devoted servant for the remainder of his life. Then she entered the portals of the palace, conscious that several pairs of eyes had noted with malicious satisfaction her home-coming in a vehicle. However, she was superior to their cheap gibes now, and, without a word to anyone, she went to her boudoir, where for over an hour she sat alone

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

thinking of Hugo Steintz, and wondering if he was thinking of her.

The princess ought to have known that a young and obscure medical practitioner who had suddenly found a real princess amongst his patients would be unable to think of anyone else. At the moment, as Steintz afterwards confessed, his brain was in a whirl. When his coachman returned with a circumstantial account of Her Royal Highness the Princess Matilda—he had obtained a good deal of inaccurate information from one of the royal servants—Steintz was overcome with joy. He was not in love with the princess, but he saw in her the patron he required to create for him a first-class practice in Dresden.

“If only she would send for me at the palace!” he said, many a time. “I am sure I could attend her better than those elderly and out-of-date doctors who have the royal patronage. But I suppose it’s impossible. Kings employ only men of international repute.”

Forty-eight hours later a royal groom called and requested Dr. Steintz to go at once to the palace and see if her royal highness had quite recovered from her fainting fit of the day before.

The princess was, of course, quite well, and she had only sent for Steintz in order to have another chat with him. Had she remained in her own suite of apartments it would have been necessary, according to the family etiquette, for her mother or two ladies-in-waiting to be present. Matilda, however, contrived to be descending the grand staircase just as the chamberlain was conducting the embarrassed and nervous doctor into an ante-room.

“Ah! there you are, doctor,” she said, with a geniality that shocked the courtier, who was accus-

## THE ELOPEMENT THAT FAILED

---

tomed to speak in awesome whispers. But he could not enter the room unless the princess gave him permission, and he was compelled to remain outside whilst she talked to the visitor, expressing her thanks with a persistence that made him more embarrassed than ever.

The princess was too clever to prolong the interview, but Hugo Steintz was German enough to translate aright the message in her eyes as she gave him her hand for the second time. He walked from the palace scarcely knowing whither he was going. The princess had plainly shown that she was attracted by him, and as he was a man of humble origin, he was sufficiently flattered to entertain emotions of the liveliest gratitude towards her. He began to see that the princess was not so plain after all. Her accent was good, and she had an "air" that was undeniably impressive. He smiled as he pictured the envy and amazement of his rivals. One of them had married a countess, and was always parading the fact before his acquaintances. What would the fellow think when he announced that he was to marry Her Royal Highness the Princess Matilda of Saxony!

With a start he realised that he was letting his imagination run away with him, and a hoarse shout from a passing cabman brought him down to earth, and with a smile he noticed that he had been walking in the middle of the street.

"I must keep my head," he said cautiously. "The King of Saxony is unscrupulous enough for anything, and would not hesitate to connive at my murder if I offended him."

But he did not know at the time to what extent the soul-starved princess had fallen in love with him, or that she had determined to descend from

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

her high position if only he allowed her to become his wife. Like many turncoats, she went to extremes. She was no longer the haughty princess despising the people; she clamoured to become one of them, and to show the world that she was worthy of helping a good man to make his way in life.

Steintz undoubtedly would have been frightened by the intensity of her passion had he known its full extent; but, as it happened, he was gradually broken in by her.

Matilda's passion for pedestrian exercise stood her in good stead. She could leave the palace and wait for Steintz in some deserted lane. He did not come to her in his carriage now, but on foot, and not until the princess expressed in actual words what her eyes had long since told him, did he venture to speak tenderly of his love for her.

It cannot be denied that Hugo Steintz loved her. The setting was romantic, and stolen meetings are sweet; but his passion for her was founded on pity, for when she spoke to him of her dull life in the palace he felt intensely sorry for her.

Once she boldly asked him to save her.

"I will not remain a prisoner all my life," she cried hysterically. "I want to be a human being—not an automaton."

Steintz tried to persuade her to be cautious.

"Your family will be furious," he said nervously. "Do you think it will be safe for us to tell your father of our—our friendship?"

"This is not the tenth century," she reminded him, a little taken aback by his caution. "What could my father do? I will emigrate with you to another and a freer country, and there we can be married."

The young doctor had not lived in a court, yet



## THE ELOPEMENT THAT FAILED

---

he knew enough of the world to be aware that the King of Saxony had enough power to make things very unpleasant for him if he mortally offended him.

"I am always ready for you, Princess," he said, kissing her hand when she so much wanted him to take her in his strong arms. "I would die for you!"

"I want you to live for me," she whispered, as they stood in the shadows of the great elm trees. "Hugo, our secret meetings cannot go on for ever. We must come into the open. Are you strong enough to win me from those who would like to part us?"

Steintz swore that he was, but in his heart he knew that he was not of the stuff of which heroes are made. He had started practice in Dresden with the expectation of leading a prosperous and quiet life, and now he found himself plotting against the King of Saxony, and on the verge of creating a scandal by making a runaway match with the eldest daughter of his majesty.

But Matilda had enough courage and resolution for both of them, and when he wished to draw back she compelled him to go forward. Nevertheless, it was not until they became aware that gossip was coupling their names that the princess and the young doctor agreed to end the tension by eloping from Dresden to London, where they knew they would be able to go about their business unmolested.

It was not, however, easy to prepare for the great adventure. Matilda wanted to realise as much money as possible, for Steintz was quite penniless, and during their courtship he had neglected his practice to such an extent that he was actually in

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

debt. The princess was entitled to a considerable amount as the eldest child of the king, but it seemed impossible to obtain it, for she quite expected that her father would refuse to hand it over unless she gave him a good reason for wishing to have the sole control of her own fortune.

Years afterwards the enemies of Princess Louisa accused her of being Matilda's chief support and encourager when she was contemplating the elopement. At the time when the king's daughter was preparing to sacrifice everything for the sake of her lover, Princess Louisa was regarded throughout Saxony as a model wife and mother, and rumour had not ventured to disparage her in any way. It was never proved that Louisa aided and abetted Matilda, who was strong-minded and courageous enough to manage her own affairs. No doubt the Crown Princess Louisa sympathised with her sister-in-law, and expressed her readiness to approve of her husband should she succeed in marrying Hugo Steintz, but when the affair became public property the Saxon royal family rigidly confined the issue to the two principals, and the princess's relatives were popularly supposed to have been taken completely by surprise.

It was arranged at a final interview between Matilda and the young doctor that he should wait in Dresden until he heard that she had succeeded in getting away. He was not to go first in case she was kept in the palace against her wish, in which event he was to start an agitation for her release, both knowing that there was nothing the king feared except publicity. Matilda assured Steintz that she would be able to deposit at least twenty thousand pounds in the Bank of England, and that they could start their married life on that

## THE ELOPEMENT THAT FAILED

---

sum, spending freely, because before it was finished her father would forgive her, and all would be well.

She was a very impetuous sweetheart, and she quite carried Hugo Steintz off his feet. He was five years her junior, but he seemed much older, and when together they appeared about the same age. At the interview which was destined to be their last he seemed at least forty, while Matilda, flushed by excitement and rendered youthful by love and happiness, looked much younger than she really was.

They had taken every precaution to make their meeting private, but every word was overheard by a detective in the pay of the King of Saxony. Little did Hugo Steintz guess that several consultations had taken place in the palace to decide what was to be done with him. What would he have said had he been told that already his fate had been settled?

Had the princess not been so very much in love she must have been puzzled by her father's genial acquiescence to her request to be allowed to have the control of her own fortune. On an eventful evening she sent a letter to Steintz to acquaint him with her success. When he received it he believed that the last obstacle had been removed.

It was on a Saturday morning that Princess Matilda left the palace, after telling her lady-in-waiting that she was going for a walk. When a mile from her home she donned a veil, and made her way to the railway station. In the crowd she passed unnoticed, and her heart was beating tumultuously when the train started for Leipzig, where she was to wait for Steintz. For what seemed an eternity it steamed through the country,

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

and she was utterly worn out with nervous excitement. In the city of Leipzig came into sight.

To her amazement she had no sooner alighted from the train than one of her father's equerries addressed her.

"I am the bearer of a message from His Majesty," he said, with a slight bow. She opened it with trembling fingers, and the count watched her as she read the fatal news, reaching to catch her if she swayed.

"You had better return before a scandal ensues," wrote the King of Saxony. "Dr. Hugo Steintz was accidentally killed last night."

She knew only too well that he had been murdered because she loved him, but she had been so well trained that even when her heart died she could walk without support to the special train that carried her back to Dresden. Once she was convinced that Hugo was dead she never referred to him, and for over a year she remained secluded in the palace, eventually appearing in public because the people of the capital thought she had been killed and were accusing her relatives of the crime.

All that was known of Hugo Steintz's end was that on his way home from his club on the night before the princess's flight from Dresden he was attacked by two men, who left him dead in the gutter.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A ROYAL ROMANCE IN AMERICA

ONE afternoon a rosy-cheeked girl of seventeen burst into her father's study in an old Philadelphia mansion, and, before he could speak, started to tell him about a French gentleman she had just met.

"You must invite him to dinner, daddy," she cried impulsively. "He has got such charming manners, and I'm sure you'll like him."

Thomas Willing, millionaire and politician, surveyed his daughter with the gravity of his sixty years, a smile playing about his somewhat grim mouth.

"Who is he, and what's his name?" he said calmly. Maude Willing put her arms around his neck lovingly. She was certainly very pretty, and those who knew her agreed that she did not require the extra attraction of her father's wealth to get her a husband.

"He goes by the name of Philips," she answered, in a whisper that betokened a mystery; "but they do say that he is a prince."

Mr. Willing laughed sceptically.

"Princes are cheap nowadays," he observed contemptuously.

The girl's face clouded.

"Mr. Philips is different to all the others," she

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

said with emphasis. "I like him very much. You mustn't be prejudiced, dear daddy." Willing took her in his arms and kissed her.

"Anything to please you, dear," he said, and sighed, for she was the image of his dead wife. "Invite him here if you think he is worth it."

Maude clapped her hands gleefully, and immediately sat down and wrote a charming note of invitation to the exiled Frenchman, who was earning a precarious livelihood in Philadelphia; and two nights later "Mr. Philips" appeared at the Willing mansion, and was entertained by the enthusiastic daughter of his host. Mr. Willing was, of course, polite, and even genial, but he could not quite get over his suspicion of foreigners. He was aware that his only daughter and heiress was already marked down by the fortune-hunters, and his secret ambition was to find her an American husband who would love her for herself, and not for the cash she would bring him.

Nevertheless, that dinner was a success. "Mr. Philips" was most interesting, for he evidently had met everybody of importance in Europe. It was obvious that he had lived behind the scenes of many of the most astonishing events of the century, and Mr. Thomas Willing could not resist the spell he cast over him.

It was a triumph for Maude. She had vindicated her claim to be a judge of character, and, so far as her father was concerned, the only cause of uneasiness was the birth of a belief that his daughter was more than half in love with the French teacher.

But he admired his guest all the same. "Mr. Philips" never once referred to his claim to princely rank. He was modest and unassuming, and he spoke with pleasure of his success in

## A ROYAL ROMANCE IN AMERICA

---

the teaching profession. Whenever he became animated Maude would watch him with distended eyes—and they were very beautiful eyes, too—her lips, slightly parted, revealing the colour of the cherry, and her rosy complexion heightened by the bright light.

Mr. Willing found his thoughts running away with him. The French teacher was good-looking, his figure slim and graceful, and his features regular and aristocratic. Yet it seemed impossible to him that his guest could be sincerely in love with his daughter. Broken-down gentlemen unexpectedly compelled to work for their living were obviously fortune-hunters, and Thomas Willing, despite the favourable impression "Mr. Philips" had created, decided to do all in his power to prevent the young couple falling in love.

But he might as well have tried to prevent the sun rising. Maude was seventeen, and romantic; "Mr. Philips" was handsome and charming. In her opinion, he was a great improvement on her countrymen, who were too busy making money to have any time for the cultivation of the niceties of life. It was only natural, therefore, that when Maude "accidentally" met the fascinating school teacher a few days later, and he offered to carry her parcels, that they should go a roundabout way to the girl's home. After the third encounter they dropped all pretence and met by appointment; and when "Mr. Philips," with characteristic French gallantry, told Maude that he loved her, she was so overcome that she merely pressed his hand, but her eyes spoke volumes.

"I will make you the greatest woman in the world," he said, just as many thousands of other lovers have spoken since the world began. But

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

"Mr. Philips" was not boasting. He knew that with a little luck he would succeed in fulfilling his promise, and that he might be King of France ere he was much older.

"When I am your wife I'll be the proudest girl in the world," she answered—and meant it. She was very happy already, but not so happy as she might have been, for she and "Mr. Philips" knew that they would find it very difficult to overcome the old-fashioned prejudices of her father.

Maude Willing had already an inkling of his identity before he proposed to her, but for some time he never mentioned the subject. When he did he astonished her by declaring that he was not only a prince, but actually the pretender to the throne of France.

For "Mr. Philips," the Philadelphian school teacher, was really His Royal Highness the Duke of Orleans, the man who would become King of France if the French people ever decided to restore the Bourbons.

"You shall be my queen," he said many times, and Maude dreamed at nights of a golden crown and of life in a great court until her brain became oppressed by the majesty of her thoughts.

It was in their favour that the French people were very popular in the United States, where they were universally admired. Maude had had her French teachers, and was a student of French history and literature. But she was, of course, too young to realise the dangers that would beset her if ever she became the wife of the Duke of Orleans. She could not understand why many conflicting parties would unite against her, or that a future king belonged, not to himself, but to his followers. The supporters of the Duke of Orleans would call



## A ROYAL ROMANCE IN AMERICA

---

upon him to marry for political reasons and not for love, and if he suddenly sprung upon them an American bride they would do all in their power to separate him from her.

She was, therefore, very happy, dreaming of her lover at night, and weaving marvellous romances about him in the daytime. There was no mistaking Louis' love for her. She was certain that it was not inspired by her money. Had he not often said to her, "One of these days I shall be ten times richer than your father, for I shall be King of France."

Despite his brilliant future, Louis was sensible enough to cling to his new profession, and it was only on Saturdays and Sundays that he saw much of his sweetheart. Then they would take trips into the country, and Louis would expatiate on the glories of France, and tell how often in the past she and the American Republic had been allies. Maude was spellbound by his eloquence, for she alone knew the real nature of the apparently meek and mild school teacher whose gentle manners were occasionally the subject of derisive comment.

Mr. Willing, of course, did not approve of his daughter associating with the French prince, but he was ignorant of the engagement, which was the one secret the lovers kept to themselves. Philadelphian society said that the Willings had taken up "Mr. Philips," and there were many hints about "fortune-hunters" and "beggarly foreigners," but the lovers went their own way, and as long as there was no public announcement of an engagement Maude's relatives appeared to be content.

It was in Louis' favour that he did not take advantage of her youth and inexperience to entrap her into a secret marriage. He was too honourable

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

for that, although it would not have required much persuasion to convince the girl that anything he said or did was right. Naturally he considered himself far superior in every way to Mr. Willing, though because he was the father of the girl he loved he always treated him with great respect.

The secret engagement was two months old when Louis, after accompanying Maude to within a short distance of her house, bade her good-night and retraced his steps to his lonely and poverty-stricken lodgings. He ascended the stairs dolefully, for he hated to be alone, but when he entered his sitting-room he was startled to see a tall form rise quickly and a voice address him in his native language.

"I hope your Royal Highness will pardon——" began the newcomer, when Louis cut him short.

"I am Mr. Philips here," he said brusquely, and then he recognised his visitor. "Why, my dear count," he exclaimed, stretching out his hand. The other took it and bent over it respectfully.

"I arrived this afternoon from Paris," he said quietly, lowering his voice for fear of eavesdroppers, for the count was one of the leaders of the party of French men and women who were trying to win the throne of France for the Philadelphian school teacher.

"And what is the news, my friend?" asked Louis, when both of them were sitting before the dying fire.

"Very favourable," was the answer, spoken in an animated and excited tone. "The French people are realising more and more every day that the Bourbons are their friends. We have emissaries stationed everywhere, and it can only be a matter of

## A ROYAL ROMANCE IN AMERICA

---

a few years before you ascend the throne of your ancestors."

He paused, expecting Louis to exhibit signs of joy, but to his amazement the prince's expression did not alter.

"I have been sent by your followers, sir," he resumed, "to make one special request." Louis raised his head. "It is difficult to express myself without giving offence, but for the sake of our noble and righteous cause, I have to ask you——"

"Yes," said the prince, probably guessing the answer.

"That you do not marry over here," said the count, not daring, however, to look him straight in the face. "It is absolutely essential that you should marry for dynastic reasons. There is not a royal family in Europe which would not welcome you, sir. Think what it would mean if we had Italy to help us.

"There are many eligible Italian princesses," the emissary went on to say, adopting a coaxing tone. "Your Royal Highness must forgive me if I am emphatic, but your followers are sacrificing a lot for you. Don't destroy their faith and loyalty by a marriage with some American girl whom they could not accept as their future queen."

The prince rose and paced about the narrow room. He was in the throes of a terrific struggle between his love and his ambition. Maude Willing was so beautiful and good and loyal that every time the vision of her fair face rose up before him he felt inclined to cast aside even the prospect of a great throne and make her his wife, even if it did cost him a kingdom.

"I must have time to think," he murmured, stopping suddenly. "It is good of you, count, to take

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

such an interest in my welfare, but certain things have happened and I am not free."

The count sprang to his feet.

"There is no marriage yet?" he gasped.

Louis stared at him.

"Then you have heard about Miss Willing?" he said with an effort.

The count nodded, afraid to speak lest he should incautiously betray to Louis the fact that his movements were the subject of constant report to the headquarters of his supporters in France.

"I must think it over," the prince said in a strained voice. "Call on me to-morrow night at this time, and I will have my answer ready for you."

Even if he had not been so very much in love with Maude Willing, the Duke of Orleans was too honourable to think for a moment of breaking his promise to her. But now that the fate of his cause hung in the balance, he decided to leave the decision with her father. The lovers had agreed not to do anything without Thomas Willing's permission, for Louis respected the millionaire, whose name stood for honesty and integrity. He was conscious that if the old man forbade the marriage he would be actuated by the best of motives.

He resolved to call on Mr. Willing at four o'clock. Maude would then be at the house of a friend, an engagement of which she had told him, and he would have the millionaire all to himself, and they could discuss the momentous question without being interrupted.

It is not to be wondered at that when Louis rose next morning, after a sleepless night, he should look worn and haggard. He had to solve a vital problem. His ambition was strong, and so was his

## A ROYAL ROMANCE IN AMERICA

love. He was devoted to the dainty American belle whose loyalty to himself was very touching. He, who had known hundreds of fair women, had never felt Cupid's dart until the day on which a fellow-teacher had presented him to the millionaire's daughter.

The prince dressed with scrupulous care as usual, and his pupils had no idea of his state of mind during the long hours he taught them that trying day the rudiments of the French language. They had, of course, heard rumours about his social position in France, but they discredited them, and boys and girls who later on were serving behind counters when their teacher was King of France, had no idea of the astounding changes the ensuing years were to accomplish.

The moment his last pupil had departed for the day, Louis set out for the Willing mansion. Greatly to his relief, its owner was at home, and received him immediately.

Since his arrival in Philadelphia, Louis had acquired something of the average American's "hustle," and when he was alone with the millionaire he came straight to the point.

"Mr. Willing," he said respectfully, "I am here to ask you for the hand of your daughter in marriage. We love one another, and I am certain that I can make her happy if you will give us permission to become engaged."

"You are, I understand, Louis Philippe, Duke of Orleans, and at present a school teacher earning fifteen dollars a week?" said the millionaire, with equal bluntness.

"That is so," said Louis, with a bow.

"And one of these days you expect to be King of France?"

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

The princely school teacher bowed again.

There was a pause of a few moments. Then Thomas Willing gave his decision in words which are still remembered in America.

"Sir," he said sturdily, "should you ever be restored to your hereditary position, you will be too great a match for my daughter; if not, she is too great a match for you."

The prince started back. Willing had summed up the position tersely and truthfully, yet Louis was too much in love to accept the decision without a struggle.

"Can't you trust me with your daughter, sir, in either case?" he said, and experienced a tightening of the heart-strings, for, now that it seemed he must lose Maude, he became fiercely desirous of keeping her.

"Circumstances would be too much for you," answered Willing, who was a shrewd and intelligent student of foreign affairs. "You are the head of a party. What would your followers say to an American wife? No, I will not allow my child to place herself in a false position. Her happiness is too precious to me. You are an honourable man, and I am sure you will agree with me that, as the wife of a pretender to the French throne, my daughter's position would be an unenviable one."

It was not a stormy interview, for Mr. Willing's politeness matched that of the Frenchman. He was cool and kept his head, and even when he spoke strongly he did not offend the susceptibilities of the prince. For close on an hour they discussed the subject, but Louis had no chance against the millionaire. All the logic and commonsense were on the side of the latter, and his arguments were really unanswerable.

## A ROYAL ROMANCE IN AMERICA

---

When they parted in the hall Mr. Willing shook hands with him.

"The time will come when you will thank me for forbidding the match," he said kindly.

Louis left the house greatly depressed, and when at the corner of the street, he met Maude on her way home, he could not conceal from her the agitated state of his mind.

"You must tell me what has happened," she said, with a catch in her voice, and side by side they made their way to a more deserted part of the city. With every step the prince's heart grew heavier.

There were tears in her eyes when they stopped, and he looked into her beautiful face.

"I have asked your father's consent, and he has refused it," said the prince, controlling himself with difficulty. "I am afraid, dear, that there are too many obstacles for us to overcome."

She brushed the tears from her eyes.

"Oh, Louis, are you going to leave me?" she whispered, and then the tears fell fast.

He did his best to explain, telling her to be calm, and then adding hopefully that, after all, there might be a way out. But Maude had enough of a woman's instinct to realise that their love romance was broken, and that fate was going to part them.

"I wish to do nothing to hamper you in your great career," she said, between her sobs. "Yet it would have been better if we had never met. Sometimes I want you to remain just a school-master, so that I might marry you, and help you, but I know that such thoughts are selfish."

"If I had the choice I'd remain in America all my life," he said, sincerely, "but I am not master of my own destinies. I belong to France, and I owe a duty to my friends and supporters. Maude,

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

you are not angry with me? You don't think I am abandoning you? Had your father approved of our marriage, nothing could have prevented it."

"Don't I know you too well, Louis?" she said, smiling through her tears. "You are the most honourable man in the whole world. I shall ever think of you with the tenderest feelings. When I am an old woman, if I live to be one, I shall always look back upon our brief engagement as the happiest time of my life."

He wanted to seize her in his arms, and tell her passionately that he would defy her father, cast aside his ambition, fling the crown of France from him, and make her his wife, but they were in an avenue through which strangers might pass at any moment, and he could only listen to her praise without being able to give vent to his feelings.

"I will see you home," he whispered, when she had said all she wished to say on the subject.

"No, don't," she pleaded earnestly. "It would only make our parting harder by reminding us of our engagement. Good-bye, Louis, and God bless you."

She ran from him and disappeared round the corner, and he was left alone amid the bleak trees of that late afternoon in February. He never saw her again, and when, some years later, he married a daughter of the deposed King of Naples, an intimate friend once ventured to ask him why he had chosen Marie Amelia to be his bride.

"Because she resembles a certain girl I knew in Philadelphia," he answered, and did not refer to the subject again. But when Louis was King of France there must have been many occasions when he wished that he had married Maude Willing and abandoned ambitions that brought only sorrow, suffering, and disillusionment.



## CHAPTER XIV

### A BELGIAN MARRIAGE

THE story of Louise of Belgium is one of the saddest on record. Ill-luck seems determined to pursue her to the grave; for just when she began to experience some tranquillity of mind, thanks to the chivalrous action of her cousin, King Albert, the Germans overran her beloved country, thereby, as she has recorded, breaking what was left of her weary heart. It was a German who wrecked her life. But had she been allowed to marry the man she loved, her fate would have been entirely different.

In her young days the princess was very beautiful, and when she was only sixteen, suitors began to flock round her. Her father, the late King Leopold, was flattered by a popularity which was as pleasing as it was unexpected.

Of course, the king never admitted that his eldest child had anything to do with it.

"I am so glad," he said haughtily, when surrounded by half a dozen princes eager to earn his friendship, "that the royal families of Europe have at last realised that I am not as bad as my enemies make me out to be."

The young men laughed behind his back. For while they admired Louise, they could not bear her

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

father, and they were only in Brussels on account of the princess.

Meanwhile the princess appeared to be the one individual unconscious of the excitement the question of her marriage created. She was quiet and unassuming, and as she loved and admired Queen Victoria, who took a special interest in her, she did her best to keep the good will of her majesty. Louise was popular everywhere she went, and the cunning Germans soon marked her down for their prey. Their chancellor determined that she should marry a German prince. "That will increase our hold over Belgium," he said in a letter that was only published thirty years later.

Louise was nearly five feet ten, with a slim figure. She had clear-cut features, with a smooth, ivory skin, and her eyes were a dark grey. Thanks to Queen Victoria, she had been well educated, and was an efficient linguist, and she could hold her own in the drawing-room or in the hunting field.

For the same reason, Leopold had Louise shadowed wherever she went. It was his intention to make something out of her marriage, and he was not above accepting part of her dowry as the price of his consent. Many times he tried to trap her into a confession concerning her ideas of a husband, hoping to discover if she had fallen in love with anyone; but the girl, who had no thought of leaving her invalid mother, had nothing to disclose, and so her father's curiosity was unsatisfied, much to his annoyance.

She was certainly not in love when she left Brussels one autumn for Mentone, where the sun was shining and Nature was at her best. The princess took with her a couple of maids, and as she

## A BELGIAN MARRIAGE

---

was to remain a month, her family engaged a suite of rooms in a private hotel for her.

It was her habit to walk from the hotel to a friend's villa a mile away—the doctors having recommended pedestrian exercise—and spend the forenoon there; and on this particular morning the princess, dressed in black and wearing furs, set out, quite unconscious of the fact that she was going to meet her ideal.

With a smile and a cheery greeting, she shook hands with her friend, not having noticed that, standing behind her, was a tall, distinguished-looking man of about thirty, whose strong, handsome face suggested the judge or diplomat. Suddenly the duchess exclaimed, with a laugh, "Why, I'd forgotten the Count. My dear, may I present my old friend, Count Raymond D'Artois? He is staying in Mentone, and very kindly looked in to see me half an hour ago."

Princess Louise extended her hand, which the count held in his for the fraction of a second. Then he lifted his eyes and looked into hers.

"Your Royal Highness overwhelms me," he murmured politely, "I am greatly honoured."

She smiled, for she was accustomed to florid compliments; and yet, extravagant as the count's language was, there was something about it that made it sound sincere to her. He was very good-looking, and when all three of them were sitting under the porch and discussing the news of the day, Louise found herself more and more inclined to fall into a reverie whenever Raymond's voice sounded in her ears. Fortunately, her friend chattered incessantly, and took little notice of her.

It is impossible to prove that such a thing as love at first sight is possible. But when twelve struck,

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

and Louise had to go, she thrilled with pleasure when the count begged permission to escort her home.

"You cannot refuse him, Louise," said her friend, who, to tell the truth, wished to get rid of both visitors. "I assure you he is perfectly respectable, and can be trusted."

The count laughed, and the princess thought that she had never heard anything so delightful.

"I shall be delighted," she said, and was surprised to hear herself speaking in a whisper.

They walked slowly, and when they were out of sight of the villa Louise began to talk in the most animated fashion. She asked a dozen questions, and presently the count was chatting to her as though they were intimate friends.

"I should like to see you again, count," she said, and her heart sank within her when she murmured "Au revoir."

"I am completely at your disposal, madame," he said, with a bow. "Indeed, if I may be so bold, I shall think of nothing else but our next meeting."

Their eyes met again, and Louise lowered hers hastily, but she was glad, intensely glad, at what she had seen in his.

"Perhaps you will escort me to the duchess's villa to-morrow morning?" she said, feeling as awkward as a village maiden in the presence of her shy lover. "I call on her every day except Sundays."

Of course he accepted, and it did not surprise Louise that he should be an hour before his time in the morning, but she hurried with her dressing and quickly joined him in the street. When they were on their way to the beautiful villa, Princess Louise of Belgium was recognised by several

## A BELGIAN MARRIAGE

---

acquaintances who curtsied to her. They scrutinised the handsome Frenchman with interest, and all came to the conclusion that Louise had been very fortunate in securing such a good-looking gentleman-in-waiting. No one thought of a possible love affair, for everybody knew that the eldest child of the King of the Belgians was destined for the hand of a king's son.

The walks became frequent, and from confidence to confidence they went. Louise was deeply in love. She had often prayed for a knight-errant who would win her heart and take her away to a lovely home, so that she would be beyond the tyrannies of her father. Was Count Raymond D'Artois that man? When he told her that he had royal blood in his veins she experienced a feeling of relief, and her congratulations were inspired by a sudden emotion based on the hope that it might make him eligible to marry her.

Yet she was afraid of her love. She had not known happiness for years, and her home life was daily growing more and more impossible. With Raymond D'Artois she could be happy and forget the realities, but when he had gone and she was surrounded by flattering servants, who constantly reminded her of the fact that she was a Royal Highness, she became helpless, and felt as though the chains of royalty were strangling her.

That Raymond first admired and then loved her she discovered the day before she was due to return to Brussels. In an unguarded moment he let fall a phrase that revealed his soul. She caught him by the arm and looked into his face.

"Hush, Raymond!" she said hurriedly, and blushed, for his Christian name had leaped involuntarily to her lips. "We must be careful." They

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

were standing in the drawing-room of the villa alone, but a moment later their hostess entered.

They could say nothing more, and it so happened that Louise's friend was going into Mentone to shop, and when she said so the princess had to express her pleasure at her society. The lovers could not get another moment together that day, and the following one was to be spent in travelling.

That night, however, Louise did a bold thing. She wrote to her father announcing her intention to spend another month in Mentone, and King Leopold replied granting permission. He had no desire for Louise and her mother to be together always.

That month clinched matters, and when circumstances forced Louise's friend, the duchess, into sharing their secret they laughed at her horror. She knew King Leopold, and she was terrified at the prospect of incurring his enmity by helping his daughter to defy him.

The course of true love ran smoothly enough for a month. Louise and Raymond unburdened their souls to one another and pledged their oaths not to think of marrying anyone else. The count had a fairly large income, and, owing to his relationship with the Bourbons, had many friends in high places. Louise hoped that she might obtain her father's consent by sacrificing half her fortune, and so, during those happy four weeks, the world was very bright and the princess could persuade herself that, after all, it was good to be alive.

She was just thinking of begging for a further extension of leave when a peremptory message came from Brussels ordering her to return home. There was a hint in the letter that her mother

## A BELGIAN MARRIAGE

---

needed her, and Louise hastened to obey the summons.

The count was distressed when she told him that she must go. He knew the sort of man King Leopold was, and he implored Louise not to tell her father their secret yet.

"Send for me," he urged, very earnestly, "and let me face him. You are only a girl, and I can see that you are frightened at him. I do not fear him."

"I will send for you when I need you, Raymond," she answered, under her breath. They were walking slowly down an avenue, the trees of which obscured them from observation, "but I will be back in Mentone soon. Wait here for me. I don't want anything to happen to you."

There was no time for discussion. Louise had to start for Brussels at once, and because they were in love they had to part there and then, for Raymond dared not see her off from the station.

When she reached the Belgian capital the princess drove at once to the royal palace. To her surprise there was a line of carriages waiting outside, and the palace itself was crowded with servants.

"What is the matter?" she asked her mother's principal lady-in-waiting.

"His Majesty is giving a banquet to-night in honour of His Highness Prince Philip of Coburg," was the startling answer.

Louise was horrified. The princess knew that Queen Victoria had forbidden Philip to enter her presence, and yet she, Princess Louise of Belgium, was expected to be polite to the ruffian. But, bad as he was, Prince Philip was to prove himself much worse later on.

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

"Where is my mother?" asked the princess after a pause. She was thinking if it would be possible for her to absent herself from the banquet on the plea that her mother needed her.

"Her Majesty has gone to Ostend," said the lady-in-waiting. "His Majesty decided that the festivities in honour of Prince Philip would disturb her, and so he sent her away."

Louise could have cried with vexation. She saw now that she had been sent for merely for the pleasure of her father's guest. With tears in her eyes she entered her boudoir, and immediately afterwards the lady-in-waiting appeared with a message to the effect that her father wished to see her.

The interview took place in the small room at the back of the palace where Leopold transacted his private affairs. He received her sitting, and, when she had closed the door, confronted her with a fierce and defiant expression.

"You have heard that Prince Philip of Coburg is here," he said roughly, "and that he dines with us to-night? Louise, I have decided that you must marry Philip. He will make you a good husband."

She was so astounded that she could not speak or move. Her face went deathly pale. Leopold noticed her pallor, and rose to his feet.

"You heard me?" he shouted. "Why don't you speak? I have obtained your mother's consent."

Poor Louise could guess how it had been obtained, and her heart overflowed with pity for the queen.

"The marriage can take place at once. Philip has the confidence of the German Emperor and his family," Leopold continued. "You have often



## A BELGIAN MARRIAGE

---

said that you'd like to have an establishment of your own. Well, here is your chance."

She wanted to tell him that she had left her heart behind in the safe keeping of Count Raymond D'Artois, a gallant and chivalrous Frenchman. She wanted to declare that she would never marry anyone but Raymond; her whole being urged her to make a stand there and then for her love, but somehow she could not utter a word. The tall form of her father, his hawk-like features distorted with rage, terrified her.

"Prince Philip will propose to you to-night," he said slowly, and with a threat in every word. "Take care that you do not refuse him."

The unhappy girl was still standing motionless, when Leopold opened the door and put her outside.

Louise prepared for the ordeal with despair in her heart, and when she took a last look into the mirror before descending the stairs she saw that her face was drawn and haggard.

"Perhaps he will think I'm ugly and not propose," she whispered to herself hopefully, unaware that had she been the oldest and ugliest hag in the world Prince Philip would have asked her to be his wife, because it was her large dowry that he was after. He was in such a position that unless he got hold of a fortune instantly he would be ruined for ever.

The story had often been told of the cynical manner in which Prince Philip proposed to King Leopold's eldest daughter. His cocksure attitude so affronted the princess that she instantly refused him, though the suitor did not exhibit the slightest disappointment. He knew that he had her father on his side, and that made victory certain.

Princess Louise was taken ill after the banquet,

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

and for some days her father was not allowed to see her. She was very weak and feverish, and when she rose from her bed she was a shadow of her former self. King Leopold's first remark upon seeing her was that she ought to be very grateful now if anybody consented to marry her.

The queen returned to the palace once more, and when she was informed of her daughter's refusal to obey her father, she urged her, for the sake of all concerned, to give in to him. Louise had never told her that she loved Count Raymond D'Artois, and that he was waiting for her at Mentone at that very moment.

Louise loved a Frenchman, and her family wanted her to marry a German. The girl loathed and detested Philip of Coburg, and she shuddered whenever she recalled the current gossip concerning him and his doings. On the other hand, Raymond was a nobleman of unblemished reputation, and she loved him. That was sufficient for her.

Could she get to him again? She began to find the palace suffocating. The air seemed heavy and nauseous. When she tried to obtain permission to go away for a short time, she was angrily informed that she must remain in Brussels until she had accepted Prince Philip.

"You only leave the palace as Philip's betrothed," said King Leopold, who was behaving like a madman because Louise was defying him. The desperate girl tried to leave Brussels unobserved, but her carriage was stopped in the street, and she was taken home again to find her mother in despair. Another fortnight went by. Louise managed to smuggle two letters to Raymond, with

## A BELGIAN MARRIAGE

---

the result that she saw him from the window of the palace one early afternoon.

She signalled to him, and he disappeared, and the same night she stole out of the palace and met him in the park opposite. There they renewed their vows, Raymond declaring that he would rescue her if he had to storm the palace single-handed.

Every word they uttered was noted by a spy in the pay of King Leopold, and, before the princess was in her mother's room again, Count Raymond D'Artois was arrested by two policemen, and was being conducted to the frontier with the threat that if he ventured on to Belgian soil again, he would be thrown into an underground dungeon.

King Leopold was made acquainted with all the details of the stolen interview, and he instantly rushed to his wife's apartments and created such a scene that the queen and her daughter went into hysterics. He swore that Louise would marry Prince Philip, threatening her with death if she maintained her obstinacy.

Innumerable scenes ensued, Louise battling bravely for the right to wed the man she loved. She hated the German prince, and she worshipped the French nobleman, but the odds were too heavy, and Philip of Coburg gained the day.

But it was a mere ghost that he led to the altar, and it was a heartbroken wife whom he robbed of the greater part of her fortune. When she refused to sign away the remnants of her dowry, he had her incarcerated in a lunatic asylum, and it was only after six years' imprisonment that she escaped. Then she divorced Prince Philip and retired into seclusion, for, by the time she was free, Count Raymond D'Artois was dead.

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

To-day the princess, mourning over the unhappy fate of her country, must often dwell on all that might have been had she been allowed to marry her first and only love. Her marriage made her a German subject, but she is once again a Belgian, and now she owes allegiance to her cousin, King Albert, who has done more than any living man to help her to find peace, if not happiness.

## CHAPTER XV

### A CZAR'S SECRET ENGAGEMENT

TWENTY-SEVEN years ago *The Times* announced that the then Czarevitch Nicholas—afterwards czar—had become engaged to Her Royal Highness Princess Helen of Orleans, the daughter of the Comte de Paris, the claimant to the French throne. The news created a sensation in Russia, France, Great Britain, and Germany, especially in the latter country, where the kaiser hastened to rouse his subjects' hostility against the proposed marriage. The other countries were favourable to it, being of opinion that even the heir to a throne has the right to choose his bride.

But German influence set to work to undermine the confidence between the lovers; their spies were indefatigable, their statesmen intrigued in courts and cabinets, and their diplomats conspired to bring pressure to break the engagement. The Huns, from Wilhelm II downwards, seemed to think that Nicholas' own opinions and wishes were not of the slightest importance, and that he was merely a puppet upon the world's stage for them to play with as they willed.

Nicholas as a young man was the same mild, kind-hearted, and weak personality as he proved in later years. Everybody liked him for his gentleness and shyness. He abhorred pomp and display,

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

and he was frightened by the responsibilities of his position, both before and after succeeding to the throne. When the kaiser discovered for himself that the future czar of all the Russias was a weak-willed dreamer, he determined to marry him to a German woman who was strong, self-reliant, and, above all, devoted to the cause of the Fatherland. In other words, a creature who from the moment she was czarina would act as a spy in Germany's interests.

It seemed to Wilhelm that Providence had provided such a person in his youngest sister, Margaret. She was the favourite and the spoilt daughter of the Empress Frederick, her patriotism was unquestioned, and she had a wilful, determined nature which would brook no opposition. She was ambitious, too, and clamoured to wear a crown, and when Wilhelm hinted that he might be able to find a splendid position for her, she responded with alacrity, and expressed her willingness to work in partnership with him.

The plot was, therefore, well prepared. Princess Margaret sought an early opportunity of meeting the czarévitch, and as she was pretty, pleasing, and tactful—she posed for the occasion as a lover of everything Russian—the young prince was impressed. It occurred to him that if he wedded a sister of the German Emperor's he would be accomplishing a noble act, for it would be a guarantee of the peace of Europe. Being naturally a dreamer, he did not suspect that the kaiser's real motive was to enslave Russia, and to make her his ally when he set forth to conquer the world.

German spies and diplomats immediately reported that the czarévitch was in love with the Princess Margaret. They exaggerated his compli-

## A CZAR'S SECRET ENGAGEMENT

---

mentary references to her, and the kaiser, convinced that the engagement would soon take place, ordered his representatives throughout the world to prepare foreign nations for it.

But "man proposes and God disposes," and even a future czar could not be master of his own emotions. Nicholas, undoubtedly struck by Margaret of Prussia, went back to Petrograd thinking of her. A few weeks later, however, he was invited by a relative to spend a month at the latter's villa near Biarritz, and Nicholas cordially accepted.

Three nights after his arrival, he was presented to a dazzlingly beautiful girl with a charming disposition. Kindness and good will shone from her lovely eyes, but it was the sweetness of her nature that caused the czarevitch to lose his heart to her that evening. The girl was Princess Helen of Orleans, a daughter of France, Russia's natural ally. Nicholas was strangely moved when she spoke to him. The poetic dreamer, who had idolised all women impartially, now found himself exalting this princess on to a pedestal of her own.

He was in love, wholly and completely. With one glance Princess Helen had captured his heart, his fancy, and his imagination. Certainly she seemed scarcely of the earth, so ethereal was her loveliness, and her sweet voice was also irresistible.

Nicholas had intended to remain a month, but when the princess left he found the place unbearable, and he wanted to follow her. Etiquette forbade that, however, and he returned home. Those who had been amongst his fellow-guests during his stay knew that he had fallen in love with Princess Helen, and they all believed that there would be no difficulty about the match. It seemed to them that there could be no obstacle. The princess was

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

free, and so was the czarévitch.. Russia and France were close friends, and even the republican government of the latter could not frown on a union of hearts.

German spies had haunted Biarritz and its neighbourhood when Nicholas was there, but it was owing to no craft that they were able to send a cipher message to Berlin stating what had happened. There had been no attempt at secrecy. The Russian prince's passion for the fair French girl was too obvious, and he was too frank to be able to disguise his feelings at any time.

The news created a panic in Berlin. Wilhelm II, in a fury, went off to see his mother and youngest sister, and he roundly abused Margaret for having failed him. With tears in his eyes he declared that Nicholas' marriage would mean the annihilation of Germany. Already the Huns could look back on over twenty years of steady preparation for war, but they were not going to declare it until they felt certain they were not going to be beaten. "A Frenchwoman on the throne of Russia!" exclaimed the kaiser, spluttering with rage. "That will seal our doom." He was fond of talking like that when his wishes were baulked, but in this case he succeeded in convincing his principal advisers that he was right in the attitude he had taken up.

"There must be no marriage between him and Princess Helen," said Wilhelm, firmly, "and we must now work to separate them."

It was not a difficult task in the circumstances. Nicholas had no idea of the craft and dishonesty of the German royal family, and he imagined that when he told the kaiser his love story the emperor would be sympathetic and hasten to approve of his



## A CZAR'S SECRET ENGAGEMENT

---

choice. The Russian prince was not a schemer, and he will live in history for his weak-mindedness and his inability to think for himself. Had he been of stronger mould he might have succeeded in marrying the girl he loved, but fate and his own supineness were against him.

He was in love, and yet he had not the courage to ask the princess herself if he had found favour in her eyes. Whenever they met his admiration was apparent, and her response was never cold; but it was through a diplomatic channel that the question was put, and when Princess Helen signified her consent Nicholas was a happy man for the first and only time in his life.

The engagement was kept a secret, not for political but for religious reasons. The princess was a Roman Catholic, and the czarévitch a member of the Greek Church, and the statesmen on both sides desired a little time to see if the differences could not be adjusted without either party being called upon to make any sacrifice of principle.

Nicholas now became a changed man. He woke up all of a sudden, as a famous diplomat put it. His relatives noticed with pleasure that he was doing his best to shake off his natural sloth and indolence. "He will become a statesman after all," they said, and were delighted, because Russia needed one badly at that moment.

As there was no public announcement, the prince and princess had to adopt a formally polite attitude towards each other whenever they met. His mother suggested that they should not see one another too often, but Nicholas would not agree, and the only concession he made was to join in a harmless little plot to keep the newspaper men off his tracks. That he was often with the princess we know now.

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

The Comte de Paris was generally to be found in Biarritz and other resorts, and Nicholas joined him and his family at regular intervals. Secrecy was observed as much as possible, compatible with the dignity of the French royal family, but as the weeks passed there seemed every prospect that the love affair would result in happiness for all concerned.

On the surface there was trouble. The reigning czar was an invalid, and his wife, a Danish princess—Queen Alexandra's sister—had proclaimed her approval of her son's choice. A German paper stated that the empress had said to Nicholas, "I don't mind whom you marry provided she isn't a German," and for once that paper spoke the truth. Her Majesty was too clever not to recognise the grave menace to peace the kaiser was, and she wished to take no part in the enslavement of the continent by allowing a German princess to share the throne with her son.

It was, perhaps, fortunate, in one sense, for Nicholas that he was not clever enough to scent the opposition—the "back-stairs" intrigue which was going on. He could never have overcome it, and in his case ignorance was bliss. He was very happy when discussing with Helen the reforms he would inaugurate when czar, and he let her know that he was relying upon her to help him.

All love affairs are fascinating, and it is a pity that Nicholas' one romance did not last longer. There might have been no war had it resulted in marriage, because in that event the Russian court would not have become the headquarters of the German spy organisation in Russia. However, it was not to be. The situation needed a strong man, and Nicholas was weak. Even when animated

## A CZAR'S SECRET ENGAGEMENT

---

and inspirèd by love he was nervous, and the flimsiest opposition terrified him. He was overwhelmed by the greatness of the position awaiting him, and once it was told him that the kaiser would be offended if he married Princess Helen he worried over it day and night, fancying that it would be a crime against his people and against peace if he began his reign by incurring the enmity of the powerful German nation. A dreamer but not a knight-errant. That best describes him, but it is exasperating to think that the lack of moral power in one man should have had so much to do with the causes that led to the starting of the great war.

The kaiser and his principal lieutenants set to work to break the unofficial engagement, which was now known to all the royal families of Europe. Queen Victoria and the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) had actually conveyed their best wishes, and Berlin was aware that leading French Republicans were gratified by the state of affairs. They had no wish to see a monarchy again in France, but they knew that with French influence at work in Petrograd the cause of peace would be strengthened.

They were busy with their plans when *The Times*, as I have said, printed the news as official. It was immediately telegraphed to Berlin, and Wilhelm II saw in it the crushing of his hopes, and in despair he almost abandoned his attempt to part the lovers. He had, of course, been in the receipt of letters from Nicholas full of the Princess Helen, and he had invariably replied with polite phrases which meant nothing. But now that the news of the engagement was common property the kaiser and his fellow-plotters were disheartened. They

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

hated the light, and they were afraid that, once Nicholas was pledged before the world to marry the French princess, he would not be able to back out of it, no matter how hard Germany's agents worked.

But the newspaper announcement was quickly contradicted from Rome, while the Comte de Paris refused to confirm it. That encouraged the kaiser, who had based his objections on political reasons. Now he suddenly switched on to the question of religion, and the master-hypocrite, who posed as the champion of the Protestant religion, and who in the early days of his reign insulted the Pope, and expressed the opinion that he was the head of all the churches in Germany, came forward as the champion of freedom. He dare not, of course, speak too freely, but he bribed scores of newspapers all over the continent to repeat again and again that Princess Helen must not change her religion. It was characteristic of German thoroughness when doing evil that even French papers were suborned and made to denounce the engagement as an attempt to undermine the faith of a French girl and a Catholic. Wilhelm must have spent some hours at the Berlin Schloss grinning as he looked through the daily heap of papers sent to him by his agents. He knew that most of the writers were avowed atheists who were pretending to be fervent Catholics because Berlin had bribed them. It was a farce, but it had a serious ending. The kaiser was aware of all the weak points in Nicholas, and he was certain that the newspaper campaign would terrify him out of his wits.

In the midst of this wordy battle the lovers met at a dinner party given by an Austrian archduke. There was naturally a little awkwardness between

## A CZAR'S SECRET ENGAGEMENT

---

them, due, of course, to the statement in *The Times*, but before the banquet was over they were on the old footing again, and the princess was her charming self. She was in brilliant form, and at least one man present there hoped that the marriage would not take place. He was not a German either, but an Italian prince who had lost his heart to her.

It should be understood that as there was actually no official engagement *The Times* was wrong. The Comte de Paris believed that his daughter was going to be the czarevitch's wife, and he had not come to that conclusion without first talking it over with her. The Emperor and Empress of Russia, fondly devoted to their son, had approved of his choice, and everybody concerned was only waiting for the propitious moment when the Russian court would announce the date of the wedding.

But the sudden and violent press campaign altered the complexion of affairs. The Comte de Paris, who was a pretender to the French throne, and who realised that his only chance of achieving this ambition was not to offend the French people, but to cultivate them in every way, was gravely impressed by the hostility of his daughter's rumoured engagement on the ground of religion. France was a Catholic nation, the prince reminded himself, and it would be a fatal blow to his prospects if he earned the hostility of its church. He did not know that the papers, which were being sent to him regularly by Germans in France, were in the pay of the kaiser, and that the agitation was part of a Prussian plot to prevent his beautiful daughter becoming Empress of Russia.

Now, the Orleans family, at least that portion of

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

it which owned the Comte de Paris as its head, was a happy and united one. Each member strove to work for the general good, and, despite political reverses and the failure of their plans for the re-establishment of the monarchy in France, it can be said with truth that there were no more contented people in Europe. The children knew that their beloved father's holiest and most sacred wish was to regain the throne of his ancestors, and when Helen read the unfair statements about herself, and how her marriage with the Russian heir, involving a change of religion on her part, would completely smash any prospect her father had of becoming King of France, she decided to sacrifice herself, give up her lover, and, even if it broke her heart, never see Nicholas again. That she was also influenced by her religious convictions is certain, but a way out would have been found had it not been for the kaiser's interference. She was in Naples when she came to this decision, and when Nicholas received her letter acquainting him with it he was so perturbed and distressed that, without a word to his parents, he went straight to her.

The last farewell interview was private, and not even the German spy who was amongst the house servants overheard a word. It lasted nearly an hour, and was not marked by an outburst on either side. Nicholas was not the man to work himself up into a passion, indeed his nature was of the sort that revels in a blighted romance. Nevertheless he was very pale and distressed when he walked from the house to his carriage, and he did not speak a word all the way back to Petrograd. He travelled as an ordinary passenger, but there were two Petrograd detectives to watch over his safety. The train attendant was a German agent, and it was

## A CZAR'S SECRET ENGAGEMENT

---

from him that the Prussian Secret Service Bureau obtained the information that enabled the chief to tell the kaiser that the secret engagement between Nicholas and Princess Helen of Orleans had been broken. Prussian intrigue had triumphed, and a chance remained that, after all, a German princess might become the wife of the heir to the throne of Russia.

Nicholas and Helen did not see one another again, the former remaining shut up in his palace in Petrograd and the princess remaining in the bosom of her family, deaf to many entreaties to make a statement for publication. It was said that the czarevitch had a bad illness, and he declined to reopen the question, being convinced that it was his fate to be a blighted lover. Nicholas had always been a fatalist, and during the most stormy incidents of his reign he always remained calm and indifferent. Had he exhibited more practical qualities he might have saved his dynasty.

The kaiser again thrust his sister upon Nicholas' notice as soon as the understanding with Princess Helen was at an end, and the prince, now quite indifferent about the question of his marriage, casually intimated to him that he had no objection. It did not matter to him whom he married, now that Princess Helen was lost to him. She had won his heart, and he could never love another.

Princess Margaret of Prussia, confident that she was going to reign over a mighty empire, adopted a haughty attitude towards all and sundry. She began to speak with an authoritative air upon Russian affairs, and she bought a grammar of the language and engaged a professor to coach her. That she had every reason for her confidence must be admitted, and as the British embassy in Berlin

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

did not protest on behalf of Queen Victoria it was rightly assumed that Great Britain would not interfere.

But the kaiser forgot the Russian empress, the mother of Nicholas. She was a strong-minded woman, with a profound knowledge of world politics, and when she heard of the little Berlin plot she smashed it by a letter which sent the conspirators flying in every direction. "I will not have a sister of the kaiser as my daughter-in-law," she wrote firmly. "I do not dislike the German people. I am all for peace, but I will not tolerate a Berlin Schloss princess on the throne of Russia." The empress knew then that she was soon to be a widow, and she wanted to see her son start his reign with every opportunity to benefit his country.

Wilhelm fumed and fretted and protested and whined. The empress would not budge an inch, and eventually he had to give way. Poor Princess Margaret, instead of becoming an empress, later on married a Hesse prince, who was so obscure that even his marriage with the kaiser's sister failed to lift him out of his natural position, and both of them were forgotten by the world, which was tired of minor German royalties.

Foiled in one direction, the kaiser turned to another, and he chose Princess Alix of Hesse, the sister of Princess Henry of Prussia, his brother's wife, to make a bid for the position of Russian empress. Alix, a clever, crafty, unscrupulous woman, willingly agreed to aid the kaiser's designs, and when she made Nicholas' acquaintance at a royal wedding she laid herself out to flatter him. He was taken on the rebound, and before the festivities were over he decided to ask her to marry him.



## A CZAR'S SECRET ENGAGEMENT

---

The engagement had scarcely been announced when the czar died, and it was as emperor that Nicholas married her on that November day in 1894, a day that was destined to be a tragic one for Europe. From the first the czarina took a prominent part in the Germanising of her adopted country, politically and industrially, but while women may influence events they cannot govern them, and when the Germans found that Imperial Russia could not become her open ally she fomented a revolution with the aid of those agents her Majesty had befriended. The result we all know, but that final tragedy in the cellar at Ekaterinburg with its conglomeration of horrors was a terrible punishment for the many mistakes of a reign that paved the way to the ruin of a once great country.

The Hague correspondent of *The Times*, writing under date of December 3rd, 1918, thus summarised the story of the czarina's manservant, who had managed to escape from the Bolshevists :

"In the last weeks before the murder the whole of the csar's family was locked up in one room, where there was only one bed. In this the csarina slept, the others being compelled to lie on the bare floor. A Red Guard sentry was in the room day and night. The csar and his family were not left one moment without supervision, and were exposed to the most unheard of insults. They were frequently awakened in the middle of the night, and compelled to answer the most brutal and shameless questions. The Grand Duchesses were exposed to the grossest insults. The manservant in his evidence before a commission of

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

inquiry said that death was a deliverance for the whole family.

"On the night of July 17 Commissary Andreieff informed the prisoners that they would be shot, whereupon they were taken to the cellar, placed against the wall, and shot. At the csar's last request he was shot with his sick, exhausted heir in his arms. The Grand Duchess Tatiana, wounded by several bullets, was dispatched by blows from the butt-ends of rifles. The bodies were taken the same night from Ekaterinburg and burnt forty versts from the city. The manservant found among their ashes diamonds which belonged to the Grand Duchess Olga, and which she had sewn into her clothing.

"Further details of the murder were established by a commission appointed by the Siberian Government. Two professors of Tomsk University and members of Tomsk and Ekaterinburg judicial bench were members of this commission. The day following the deed the Bolshevists announced the shooting of the csar, but kept that of the other members of the family secret. The traces of blood in the cellar were removed and those of the bullets obliterated. The Grand Dukes Johan and Igor Constantinovitch and Sergo Mikhailovitch were murdered at Volopaievsk and in Perm."

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE LADY-IN-WAITING

POPULARITY can occasionally be embarrassing, as Ferdinand of Roumania experienced when he was young, unmarried, the heir to the crown, and the darling of the Roumanians. From his early youth he was liked by everybody, for he was good-tempered and unassuming, and his devotion to his country was well known. Besides all that he was a fine figure of a man, a splendid sportsman, and a great believer in the future of Roumania.

It is not surprising, therefore, that from the day he reached manhood his future subjects should take a more than personal interest in the question of his marriage. They wanted him to marry well, not only for the sake of the prestige such an alliance would bring the country, but because they felt that if he found the right wife, he would be happy, and at the same time have someone to help him to achieve his ambitions. And he was ambitious, too. In those days he dreamed of a Greater Roumania, and it is not unlikely that he may live to see his aspirations gratified.

But some years went by, and still the papers could only continue to record that the prince was not engaged. He visited the various capitals of Europe, and, on one occasion, he spent a fortnight with the Czar of Russia. The length of his stay

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

created a rumour to the effect that he was seeking a match with a beautiful relative of the Russian emperor, but when a Paris daily announced that an engagement had been arranged between him and the czar's cousin, it was promptly contradicted, greatly to the disappointment of the Roumanians. However, they forgave him, and made up their minds to allow him a little longer to find a wife who would do him and them credit.

It is impossible to know what the prince's feelings were at that time. He was so boyish and happy that the serious study of international politics was a task at which he shied. He knew several nice princesses of royal birth, who would have listened willingly to a proposal from him, but somehow he could not make up his mind, and so a series of journeys and introductions, and ballroom *tête-à-têtes* left him a bachelor at twenty-five.

Of course, no one despaired of him yet. It occasionally happened that a prince did take years to make up his mind, and his aunt, the queen, who loved him devotedly, was always on his side when her husband, the king, and his principal advisers, discussed the subject of his marriage.

"Leave him alone," she said courageously. "He will meet a girl one day, and fall in love with her, and then we'll have nothing to do but to get ready for a state wedding." She little realised how soon the first part of her statement was to be fulfilled.

It must have been the same month that one of the ladies-in-waiting to her majesty resigned to get married, and there was keen competition for the post. After considerable hesitation the queen selected the daughter of Colonel Vacaresco, a soldier who had distinguished himself in the wars against the Turks. Helene, his only child, was a

## THE LADY-IN-WAITING

---

tall brunette, of twenty, with a lovely complexion, dark, provoking eyes, and a rosebud mouth. She was, in fact, a "dark-red rose," as the prince described her on the occasion of their first meeting. Helene Vacaresco had been educated on the most modern lines. She could speak English, French, and German, and her musical ability was pronounced; indeed, it was said that her majesty, who was passionately fond of music, selected her after hearing her play a most difficult composition on the piano.

The girl herself was delighted with her promotion. She had seen a good deal of society in Bucharest, but it was slow and provincial compared with the people she would become acquainted with in the royal palace. She was ambitious, as all clever persons are, and she knew that, given a chance, she would make a name for herself.

She came to the palace like a breath of fresh air, and the other ladies-in-waiting had soon to take a back seat. There seemed to be nothing that Helene Vacaresco could not do. She knew all about the fashions, and she proved that she had not neglected the more homely of the arts for the sake of acquiring what the world calls smartness. She could mend and sew and cook, and the Queen of Roumania, a keen housewife, took Helene to her bosom.

Of course, the inevitable happened. Prince Ferdinand, returning from a long Continental tour, walked unexpectedly into his aunt's boudoir, and found her being read to by one of the most beautiful girls he had ever seen. It was, however, her voice that first took his fancy, for her face was bent over a book, and as he stood inside the door and surveyed the pretty scene for a few moments,

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

he listened as if entranced. Then the queen half-turned and saw him, and she was instantly on her feet and was welcoming him with open arms.

The lady-in-waiting retired immediately she had been presented to the prince, but Ferdinand's eyes never left her slim form until the door closed behind her. Then he sat down beside the queen, and asked her to tell him all about the mysterious beauty.

The queen, never guessing the consequences, poured into his ear whole-hearted and generous praises of the girl. She told him that she was her greatest comfort, and that her youth had made her feel a dozen years younger.

"She is good, and kind, and very discreet, Ferdinand," she said enthusiastically, "and I don't know what I should do without her. I suppose it's selfish, but I pray every night that some nobleman attached to the court may not fall in love with her and take her away."

The prince had caught only a glimpse of Helene, yet he was certain that the queen had not exaggerated, and he was sorry that the girl had left them.

He had looked forward to this reunion with his aunt, but somehow he now found himself in a hurry to end the interview. He wanted to go in search of Helene and have a chat with her.

When he was able to leave the queen's presence without appearing to be rude, he immediately began his search. It was not, of course, easy in the huge palace, but he persevered, and, with great good luck, he came upon Helene in the dining-room. The table was prepared for dinner, and she was busy inspecting the decorations, to make sure that they were all right before the guests arrived.

## THE LADY-IN-WAITING

---

Several servants were in the room, but the prince went straight up to Helene and entered into conversation with her. It was easy to find a subject—he knew her father—and it did not take long to pass from praise of her parent's military career to her own self.

They were instantly good friends. Two natural and unaffected persons could not help being otherwise. Helene was only too delighted to be taken notice of by the handsome young prince, and from the dining-room they strolled into the drawing-room, and there they conversed until it was time to change for the banquet.

"I will see you at dinner," he said hopefully, giving her a look that must have told her many things. She smiled good-humouredly.

"I'm afraid you won't," she said, and there was a mischievous glint in her eyes. "Their Majesties are entertaining the leading diplomatists in Bucharest, and only the principal lady-in-waiting will attend on the queen. I'm not sorry. We had a dance last night, and I'm very tired, so I'll retire before ten."

The prince murmured that he would miss her—there were a score of ladies and gentlemen in the room now—and she went out, and for twenty-four hours Prince Ferdinand did not see her again.

He was already in love with her, a fact which accounted for his restless, nervous attitude during the protracted meal and the subsequent presentation of diplomatists. The scene, brilliant in everybody else's opinion, bored him. He was thinking of beautiful Helene Vacaresco, the girl who had so suddenly captured his fancy.

The prince asked himself why it was that a girl, described by his aunt as perfect, should be con-

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

sidered not worthy of his hand. He knew that if he told the king or queen what his thoughts were they would have protested vehemently, and, kind-hearted though they were, immediately deprive the young lady of her position at court and send her home. It was a ridiculous state of affairs, but Ferdinand decided that he would marry Helene, and thereby provide Roumania with the best possible queen it could have. It could ask for no more.

The prince's experiences during the next few days were tantalising. He had one delicious interview with Helene, when she talked of her happy holiday in Paris six months previously, and he had been charmed and entertained by her musical voice and clever tongue. That interview had been ended by the coming of his aunt, who had smiled benevolently upon the young couple, and had indicated by her manner that she was glad Helene and her nephew were friends.

"You've always disliked our having so many old people about us," she said to the prince, as he escorted her to her carriage, "but now that Helene is here, I hope you will let us see more of you at home."

The day after the girl went home for a fortnight, because her father was ill. It was the longest fortnight in Ferdinand's life, and he was miserable and distracted during her absence. However, her appearance in the palace compensated for everything, for it was a case of absence making the heart grow fonder. Ferdinand had realised that if he wished to be happy, he must take advantage of the first opportunity that presented itself, and tell Helene that he would consider himself the most



## THE LADY-IN-WAITING

---

fortunate man in the world, if only she would consent to be his wife.

He did not delay his proposal. The girl looked so pretty, and was so healthy and young that, just as his aunt had said, Ferdinand found in her the best of tonics. She knocked years off the old palace, and gave a touch of brightness to every room in it, and Ferdinand, who was only waiting for the right moment, decided that it had come when he chanced upon her in the drawing-room one early June morning.

She could not have been surprised when he pronounced her name without the formal mademoiselle, but she turned and faced him with a heightened colour and a heaving bosom. Helene Vacaresco knew what was going to happen, and she had thought it all over long before the prince took her right hand between his and asked her to marry him.

Helene instinctively felt that it was an honour to receive a proposal from Ferdinand; not because he was heir to a throne, but for the reason that he was a gentleman. His modesty and his charming suppression of the advantages he could offer her filled her with gratitude. He was so sincere and chivalrous, and his declaration that she could trust herself to his keeping, and that he would battle for her, brought tears into his eyes.

"I've been thinking about you while I've been away," she said, when he pressed her to speak.

"You love me, then?" he whispered, eagerly.

"Of course I do," she answered, with pride in her voice and eyes. "I couldn't forget you after that first hasty meeting, but, Ferdinand, you have forgotten your uncle and aunt, and your position, and——"

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

"I will bring them round to my way of thinking," he said, quickly. "You know the queen denies me nothing. If she is persuaded that you alone can make me happy, she'll give her consent."

"I would die if I didn't prove a faithful, loving wife," she said, in a far-away tone, "but yet I fear fate will be too much for us. Our engagement will make many enemies for us, and they will strive to part us."

"Then let our engagement be a secret, known only to ourselves and to the king and queen," he suggested, eagerly. "Helene, you must be mine. I've never wanted to marry for dynastic reasons. That is why I would not propose to those German and Russian princesses. I determined to wait until I fell in love with a nice girl, and here I am your slave. You must help me to my happiness. Why, Helene, you are just the queen Roumania wants. You are clever and wise, and when the day of trouble comes for our nation, your advice will be wanted."

She did not contradict him, feeling that it would be cruel to spoil their little romance. But the girl, a Roumanian herself, knew what the hopes of the people were, and she realised that they would be bitterly hostile to her marriage with their future king.

"Then it is agreed that I tell my aunt at once?" said the prince, when it was evident that they could not remain undisturbed much longer.

The girl started, but quickly recovered, and smiled.

"I would do nothing contrary to your aunt's wishes," she said in a sweet voice; "and you must take her into your confidence. She has been goodness itself to me. And, Ferdinand, if the queen

## THE LADY-IN-WAITING

---

ever asks me to give you up, I will, for I owe everything to her."

"I'll see you again as soon as possible," he said before leaving her, "and you may expect good news."

But Helene knew his aunt better than he did himself, and Ferdinand was astounded when the queen received his statement with a look of astonishment, succeeded by dismay. In her first moments of amazement she declared that the engagement was impossible.

"Your uncle will never sanction it," she said, standing facing him, with her right hand on his shoulder. "Ferdinand, you are the hope of the nation. The king and I will never see Roumania great, but you will, though it may only come after much suffering. For the sake of the people, give up all thought of this marriage."

"If I lose Helene I shall only want to die," he said, frightened by the attitude of the queen. "Can't you understand that I love her? It's no ordinary love. Haven't you said yourself that she's perfect? Can you say half as much about any princess in Europe at the present moment? If I wanted to marry one of the dull and intriguing relatives of the kaiser you'd congratulate me, but when I ask permission to give you a niece-in-law who will do you credit, and who is far superior to every princess in Europe, you become almost hysterical. I can't understand it, and I won't tolerate it. I must marry Helene, even if it costs me the crown."

The agitated aunt, who loved him as a mother, could only remind him that kings and princes had their duties as well as their privileges. But the

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

impetuous young lover could scarcely restrain his impatience.

"You won't dismiss her because I've taken you into my confidence?" he said suddenly, remembering that his disclosure might endanger Helene's position at court.

"Of course not," the queen answered, dabbing at her eyes with her handkerchief. "I will see that she is treated fairly. She has done nothing wrong, and it is not her fault if she is beautiful. But, believe me, dear, marriage with her is out of the question."

There was a great family council the same day, over which the king presided, and Prince Ferdinand's "escapade" was considered. It was known that the queen, famous as "Carmen Sylvia," was inclined to regard the matter sympathetically, but his majesty would not tolerate for a moment the idea that his nephew could marry a girl who did not even belong to the nobility.

Following the conference, there was an interview between the king and Ferdinand, and it was not a quiet one. The prince left his uncle's presence declaring that it was a case of Helene Vacaresco or no one else, and he threatened that, if she was dismissed, he would go with her.

The royal family was in a quandary, when, most unexpectedly, the problem was solved. All concerned had agreed to keep the affair secret; but it leaked out, and the first intimation the king and queen had of the fact was the assembling of a huge crowd in front of the palace. The people made no attempt to conceal their dislike of the projected marriage. They wanted the prince to marry a princess, and now they denounced Helene, and shouted that they would not permit the betrothal.

## THE LADY-IN-WAITING

---

It was a terrifying ordeal for the lovers, though Ferdinand hastened to assure Helene that he would stand by her. He spoke valiantly, but his words were almost drowned in the roar of the incensed crowd. The girl's heart turned to lead as she realised that there was no appeal against the verdict of the people. She could have defied the king and queen, but not a whole nation, and her tears fell fast as she admitted to herself that the end of her romance was not far off.

However, she did not betray her feelings, knowing that she would only hurt the prince, and she summoned all her courage, and looked very happy when he said good-night to her. She had never forgotten the first time he had murmured those very conventional words in her hearing. How long ago that seemed now; yet it was less than a couple of months!

An official statement was issued at once, announcing that there was no engagement between the prince and Helene Vacaresco, and that quieted the people. Meanwhile Helene was preparing not only to leave the palace, but to exile herself from Bucharest. Her heart was broken, for she dearly loved the prince, but for the sake of Roumania she had to make the great sacrifice.

The girl felt very mean when, some weeks later, Prince Ferdinand saw her and his aunt, the queen, off to Venice. It was understood that they were to spend a month there, and that Helene was to return with her. She shook hands with the man she loved as though it was only a temporary separation, but she knew that she would not see him again.

When they arrived at Venice, Helene completed her arrangements, and on the 2nd of September,

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

1891, she slipped quietly out of the life of the queen and her nephew, Prince Ferdinand, and faithfully kept her promise not to write to her lover. It was a bitter duty, but she performed it; and, if she suffered then, she knows now that it was all for the best. When Ferdinand married a granddaughter of Queen Victoria, Roumania was satisfied. But sometimes he must recall the dark-eyed beauty with whom he was in love when he was young and free from care.

## CHAPTER XVII

### A SHATTERED ROMANCE

THERE was ample proof in existence twenty years ago that the Royal Family of Portugal was in a parlous state politically. King Carlos had, for some reason or another, earned the hatred of the anarchists, who managed to persuade a great many persons that it would be for the good of the country if they expelled their ruler. Carlos knew this, and when his elder son reached a marriageable age he decided that, if the throne was to be saved, he must marry into one of the most powerful reigning houses in Europe.

He certainly needed help very badly. Everything was going wrong with him, and he found it impossible to rectify the mistakes of a quarter of a century. When he appealed to the Crown Prince, the latter, a good-humoured, plump young man, with an engaging cast of countenance, promised to do all in his power to succour his father.

It was a large order, however, to be asked not to fall in love except with the particular princess the king meant to choose for him. Prince Louis Philip was very impressionable, and he had inherited his father's fondness for female society.

In 1906 King Carlos and his elder son started on a tour of the courts of Europe. They arrived first at Berlin, where the now ex-kaiser, anxious to

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

smash the alliance between Great Britain and Portugal, lavished hospitality upon his guests, and bluntly promised to provide the prince with a wife who would bring him not only political strength, but a large sum of money. In the circumstances, Carlos felt drawn to Wilhelm II, and, believing him to be sincere, declared that he would take his majesty's advice in all matters.

The kaiser, ever on the look-out for a chance to prove his talents as a matchmaker, broke the rule of a lifetime, and invited his cousins, the princes of the Catholic section of the House of Hohenzollern, to the Berlin Schloss. He had never liked them, and he resented their wealth and their fondness for maintaining a state which Wilhelm once angrily denounced as an infringement of his rights. However, that had to be forgotten now. Here was the heir to a throne waiting to be suited with a wife, and, as it was absolutely necessary that the bride should be a Roman Catholic, the German Emperor, to suit his own convenience, forgot the past.

A series of entertainments took place in Berlin and in Potsdam, and the season at both places was a brilliant one. Carlos, able to enjoy himself without the eyes of his critics upon him, temporarily banished his worries, and his son, who did not know the heavy burden that the crown of Portugal was, danced and flirted and made himself more popular than ever.

Several times his father asked him if he had found a girl to whom he could offer his heart and hand, and only once did the boy name a princess. She, however, was not a Roman Catholic, and nothing more was said about her.

Then came a sudden end to the festivities. One



## A SHATTERED ROMANCE

---

morning the King of Portugal received an urgent telegram from his Prime Minister advising him to return to Lisbon at once. There was no resisting it, and Carlos, sorry to have to leave Berlin, rushed to his capital by special train.

The Crown Prince of Portugal did not go with him, but it soon became obvious that his host expected him to terminate his visit. The kaiser was due to visit Russia and confer with his dupe, Nicholas, and he had come to the conclusion that he had spent enough money on the prince, and that it was now up to him to repay him by asking his permission to propose to one of his relatives.

Prince Louis, however, did no such thing. He had not been anywhere near falling in love, and his popularity as a bachelor had impressed him with the idea that it was not irksome being without a wife. He knew that he was only made a fuss of because the princesses realised he was a future king, and were competing for the honour of wearing a crown.

As soon as Louis saw he was no longer welcome he resolved to pay a surprise visit to his uncle, the Archduke Leopold of Austria, and he went to Vienna without previously notifying his father.

It was three days after his arrival in Vienna that he was invited to a semi-state banquet at the Hofburg. This was the annual dinner which the Emperor Francis Joseph gave to his relatives. He did not like the majority of them, but as they were members of the House of Hapsburg he felt compelled to take some notice of them. Accordingly, for one day in each year the Hofburg was crammed with archdukes and archduchesses, and there was a tremendous amount of gossip, and enemies who

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

were closely related met, and tried to conceal antagonism under a chilly politeness.

Prince Louis was given the honour of escorting Princess Elizabeth, the emperor's favourite granddaughter, into the state dining saloon, and, on these occasions, her royal highness was never in a good temper because her husband, not being a Hapsburg, was not invited to the feast. Her marriage had not proved a success, and, as she possessed a vitriolic tongue, she amused herself now by giving her companion descriptions of her fellow-guests, which were anything but complimentary. It was all very alarming and disturbing to a healthy young man, whose paramount wish was to be friendly with everyone. He was no backbiter or slanderer, and it seemed a pity to him that the princess was so cross and spiteful.

At the first opportunity he slipped away from her after dinner, and he sighed with relief when he found himself in the state drawing-room surrounded by friendly faces. He was chatting to an archduke when two girls came up to them. Louis knew neither, and, at his request, he was presented. They were sisters, tall, very fair and meek-looking, and it was a relief to the Portuguese prince to find two Hapsburg princesses who lacked the sensual twisted mouth and the sly eyes of the family.

Without any effort on his part he was able to lead the elder of the two girls aside and chat with her. She proved to be very entertaining, and her elation at seeing the Hofburg was quite touching.

"We live so far from Vienna that we hardly ever come here," she said, prettily. "I never knew the Hofburg was so big. And isn't the emperor a dear!" As she was speaking the crown prince

## A SHATTERED ROMANCE

---

was thinking that in Princess Louise of Parma he had found the girl he and his father had been looking for.

But there was one objection. She belonged to a poor and an obscure branch of the Hapsburgs; indeed, doubts had been cast upon their claim to be considered relatives of the Austrian Emperor. And it was only by reason of his majesty's kindness that they had been recognised at all. The Parmas, as they were called, were hardly known outside their country home, and Prince Louis would have been more than amazed had he been told that a sister of the girl who had so speedily excited his admiration was destined to become Empress of Austria and Queen of Hungary ten years later.

Knowing nothing of the future, he experienced a considerable amount of satisfaction as he dwelt upon the advantages that would accrue to the young beauty if she married him. He was very young, and he could not help it if his manner was a trifle condescending, but Princess Louise scarcely noticed it. All she was conscious of was that, for the first time in her life she had met a man who seemed to prefer her to all other women. That was sufficient for her, and, coming from an unhappy home, and one which was daily the scene of quarrels, she inwardly prayed that the Crown Prince of Portugal might not forget her when they parted.

Naturally his royal highness' smallest action was duly noted, and when it was seen that he did not leave Princess Louise's side, the rumour was started that he had fallen in love with her. The archduchesses, especially the young and unmarried, smiled scornfully at the idea, and rejected it as

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

impossible, but Prince Louis kept close to her all that evening, and when it was time for her to return with her mother, he insisted upon escorting her to her carriage.

That night a telegram was despatched to King Carlos informing him that his elder son and heir had fallen in love with a penniless princess, who was a member of a family which possessed no influence. The king was upset, and replied with a request that the prince should return to Lisbon. Unfortunately by the time the latter message reached the Hofburg, Louis was already on his way to spend a week-end with the Parmas. The intriguing and clever mother of Princess Louise, born a Princess of Saxony, had determined to bring matters to a head, and she had, therefore, invited the heir to the throne of Portugal to renew his acquaintance with her daughter at home.

"If the old lady gets him into her house," said that prince of cynics, the Archduke Leopold, "she will never let him go until he has promised in writing to marry her daughter."

It was a whirlwind week-end, and Prince Louis had the time of his life. The Parmas might not be rich or very happy, but they successfully concealed the fact for four days at least, and money was spent lavishly to make the visit of his royal highness a success. A dinner party was given every night, at which Princess Louise wore dazzling clothes and displayed jewellery which must have cost a fortune. She had looked beautiful to the prince at the Hofburg, now she was ten times more so.

In the daytime they motored about the pretty country, and Louis, hopelessly in love, made no secret of his infatuation. As for the girl, she had

## A SHATTERED ROMANCE

---

already given him her heart, and she, at any rate, was sincere. Her mother, of course, was merely working for selfish reasons. She had several daughters, and lovers were few, and the chance of winning such a prize as a future King of Portugal made it worth while borrowing thousands of pounds and risking the burden of heavy debts.

"Her husband will pay them," said the archduchess tersely, when her brother ventured to ask who would settle the bills. He was not quite convinced, knowing how keen King Carlos was on making a much more brilliant match for his son.

However, the archduchess swept all obstacles from her path. Louis and Louise were undoubtedly in love with one another. "I will see that the emperor befriends them," she said more than once; "besides, Louis will be a more popular king than his father. He has a lot more sense."

The prince's family raised many objections to the proposal, although Louis assured his parents that Louise would make him a perfect wife. Opposition only served to inflame his ardour. He was naturally very chivalrous, and when the girl was criticised he stood up for her and defended her. In vain King Carlos asked him to remember the position of his family in Portugal and he reminded his son that he had not long since promised to obey him in everything concerning his marriage.

"But that was before I met Louise," he answered, and would listen to no more arguments against the match.

At every opportunity he travelled to Austria, and during 1907 he was often in Vienna, where the Princess Louise was brought by her mother to meet him. She was crazy to see her child Crown Princess of Portugal. "Louise is the only one

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

---

who will be a queen," she said, when her tactics were the subject of debate, "and it is my duty to see that everything is done for her."

The girl herself would have been much happier if she had been left alone a little. It was unnerving to hear that all the royal families of Europe were discussing her alleged engagement to Prince Louis. He had not yet proposed, by the way, though she knew in her heart of hearts that she had won his love and need fear nothing.

In the month of October, 1907, Prince Louis came to Vienna to see the emperor. The old man was in favour of the alliance between him and Louise, for it would add to the prestige of Austria, and it was because he was certain of Francis Joseph's sympathy that the crown prince left Portugal unexpectedly and turned up at the Hofburg. But he had another good reason, and that was a wish to propose to Louise and to notify the various cabinets of the world that he intended to marry the daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Parma.

The weather was bitterly cold, and the consequence was that one night the princess, returning from a ball, caught a chill, and was ill for several days. At one time it seemed as if she must succumb, and during the crisis the crown prince was in a terrible state of agitation. But the girl recovered, although she was very weak and pale and frail-looking when she came down to the drawing-room, where her lover had been waiting for her for an hour.

Louis was the most tender-hearted of men, and the tears filled his eyes when he saw her. She broke into sobs as he told her in low tones that she

## 'A SHATTERED ROMANCE

---

must promise to marry him, and give him permission to announce their engagement.

They did not refer to the opposition, but each was thinking of it. The princess' mother had often talked about it, and had stated in her hard, implacable way that she would fight their enemies and rout them. Louise wished that she had no enemies, and she certainly did not wish to fight anybody, for she only wanted peace.

The crown prince stayed late, for it was nearly midnight when he returned to the Hofburg, but there and then he sat down and wrote to his father a very long letter, which contained amongst other news the statement that he had proposed to Princess Louise, and that, barring accidents, they would be married in June, 1908. The prince filled many pages with rapturous compliments to his fiancée, and concluded with a moving appeal for his father's sympathy. He was assured of his mother's, for that lady could refuse her son nothing.

The position of King Carlos was a very difficult and delicate one, and it is to his credit that when he realised that all his hopes were to be blighted that he should have refrained from showing temper. All he did was to request Louis to keep his engagement a secret until certain events at home had developed, and he would be able to inform his people of the name of their next queen.

Of course, the crown prince and Princess Louise were delighted when they read King Carlos' message, and it so relieved the girl's mind that she made rapid progress. Her mother was already preparing her trousseau, and it was amusing to notice how she unconsciously assumed the airs of the mother of a queen, although her daughter had yet to be married and her fiancé's father still

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

reigned. Nevertheless the lovers had an all too short fortnight together in Vienna, and very often they were seen in the shops, theatres, and restaurants. Those who had hitherto considered the princess plain now began to see that she had many good points. It is wonderful what an engagement will do.

Then came the parting. Prince Louis was to go back to Lisbon and put in several months' apprenticeship to kingcraft, whilst Louise was to spend the time before her marriage in her country home. She was very happy and contented, and her popularity amongst the people of the district was not to be despised. As a rule, the Hapsburgs earn more criticism than praise so far as the peasantry are concerned, and Princess Louise was greatly touched when she was told that the agricultural labourers and their families were saving up to give her a wedding present.

The months went by rapidly. There was a family party for Christmas, which would have been complete could Prince Louis have been there, but his daily letter and his gift of a diamond necklace were tokens that he had not forgotten. He wrote enthusiastically of his prospects, and sometimes mentioned that he was sure that the people rather liked him.

There was no official announcement of the engagement, but it was known from one end of Europe to the other, and by reason of it the Parma family were the object of much consideration and respect. Certain haughty archduchesses accepted invitations which they had in the past refused, and there was a rush to get on friendly terms with the grande dame who would become a personage of



## ... A SHATTERED ROMANCE

---

importance in world affairs as soon as she was mother-in-law of a reigning king.

January passed slowly—the inevitable reaction after Christmas—and no one was sorry when its last day dawned. Princess Louise, living far away from the cities, heard little of the gossip of the day. She did not mind. Chattering busybodies were abhorrent to her, and in the quiet preparations for her marriage she found all the excitement she desired.

On the morning of the 1st of February, 1908, the girl paid a round of visits to her humble cottage friends, and in the afternoon she went for a ride, accompanied by her sister. She returned late, and when she entered the house she was astonished to hear someone sobbing. Rushing into the drawing-room, she found her mother with a handkerchief to her eyes, whilst a telegram was lying on the floor. Mechanically she stooped to pick it up, and immediately her eyes caught her lover's name. Then she read it, conscious that her mother was watching her closely :—

“ Regret to have to inform you that King Carlos and the Crown Prince of Portugal were both murdered to-day. Details follow.”

The paper fell to the floor again, and ere it touched it a terrible cry from the white-faced girl told its own story. Her romance had been shattered, and she collapsed in her mother's arms.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### AN IMPERIAL MATCH-BREAKER

FOR many years previous to the great war the Duke of Cumberland, a German prince who was robbed of his rights as King of Hanover by the present ex-kaiser's grandfather, lived in Austria under the protection of Francis Joseph. He declined to set foot on German soil, a fact which often sent Wilhelm II into fits of fury bordering on insanity. The kaiser has always been a most suspicious person, and he firmly believed that the old duke was taking advantage of his friendship with the Austrian Emperor to plot against Germany's interests.

At that time the duke had two sons, and it was the elder, Prince George, who was specially selected for the "cure by kindness" treatment. He was, at the date of which I am speaking, twenty-three, and was known not to have had any love affairs. In addition to his father's wealth there was a possibility that he might one day come into possession of the Hanover Fund, variously estimated at between seven millions and ten millions sterling, the whole of which rightly belonged to the duke as the son of the last King of Hanover.

Prince George was, therefore, brought to Berlin, and fêted and flattered until the kaiser was quite

## AN IMPERIAL MATCH-BREAKER

---

certain that he had turned him against his father. The prince was nothing out of the ordinary. He was of average height, rather pale, and looked inoffensive. His manner certainly was quiet, and he lacked the boisterousness of the kaiser's sons, while his capacity for strong drink was, in the words of the Crown Prince of Prussia, "miserably weak." However, the whole of the imperial family helped in the good work, and there were many regrets that Princess Victoria Louise was not old enough to make the prince the kaiser's son-in-law.

From Berlin, Prince George was to have proceeded to Denmark on a visit to his aunt, but, greatly to Wilhelm's annoyance, he received a telegram from the duke requesting Prince George's immediate return to the family seat at Penzing, near Vienna. The German Emperor guessed that it would not take the duke long to undo his work, and it was with a sulky and glowering expression that he bade farewell to his guest.

A few years passed. The elder son of the Duke of Cumberland was still unmarried, although English, Danish, and Russian princesses had been mentioned by the papers as candidates for his hand. The journals were wrong, however. Prince George was not a marrying man, because he had yet to meet a girl who appealed to his heart. He had seen many pretty princesses, and they had been very flattering to him, especially several of the kaiserin's unmarried nieces, but he could not love any of them, and, as he was not the heir to a throne, he determined to marry for affection only.

Whenever he read that he was supposed to be waiting for the kaiser's only daughter to grow up, he smiled ironically. He had seen too much of her to fancy her as his wife. She was the spoilt pet

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

of the Berlin Schloss, and, in his opinion, she was quite impossible.

But if the kaiser was striving to find a bride for Prince George, the boy's father was doing the very same thing. The duke was very anxious that his heir should find an Austrian wife, or, if that proved impossible, a Bavarian. He was ready, however, to welcome any girl to his family provided she was not a Prussian, or related to Wilhelm II.

For three months every year the duke took a palace in Vienna and entertained, and there was never any lack of eligible girls. The loveliest princesses danced under his roof, and his banquets were something to be remembered. Yet season after season went by, and Prince George was not engaged, and there was not even an indication that he intended to be. His mother was in despair. She fancied that he had fallen in love with a Prussian princess and was concealing the fact because he did not wish to hurt his father, whom he worshipped. But the prince was able to assure her that she was mistaken. He was simply waiting for love to come to him.

It came sooner than he expected, for it was about a week after the interview with his mother that one night he was requested by the duke to take Her Royal Highness Princess Mary of Bavaria in to dinner. She was a niece of the present ex-king of that country; and she was on the small side, and, like most Bavarian Royalties, her complexion was dark. Her features, however, were regular, and her manner was charming and ingratiating.

Princess Mary was a bright, chatty person, and, as the castle of Penzing was gloomy and depressing, she created a great impression. As a rule family meals amongst the Cumberlands were ordeals,

## AN IMPERIAL MATCH-BREAKER

---

for the duke's manner was solemn and majestic, and there was an air of restraint about everything and everybody which was almost unbearable. But the Bavarian princess had not learned in her twenty years of life to respect bogeys, and she quickly infected those present with her good spirits. When the dinner was over, and she left the room with the other ladies, Prince George, for one, felt that he had lost by her departure. He was glad to rejoin her in the drawing-room, and more than delighted to find that she had a magnificent singing voice. That was a memorable night for him, and he went to bed hoping that the princess was heart-whole, and that, if he proposed to her, he would not meet with opposition either from her or from his parents.

He need not have worried. Princess Mary of Bavaria had been invited by the duke and duchess with the deliberate intention of ending Prince George's bachelorhood. His parents were very anxious for him to marry. He was past his thirtieth year, and, as they were growing old, it was essential that he should be settled before they died. The princess herself had probably had more than an inkling of their intentions, but she behaved so naturally that it was impossible to say for certain whether she was really in the secret.

Next morning Prince George volunteered to conduct her over the estate, and she smilingly consented. They did not return for lunch, and when they did appear they explained, with laughter and blushes, that they had wandered so far that they had been compelled to drop in for lunch at the house of the duke's agent.

The family were very pleased. Prince George was coming out of his shell. Princess Mary stayed a week at Penzing, and when she left it was prac-

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

tically settled that she and Prince George should become betrothed. The Bavarian royal family was known to be anxious to form an alliance with the Cumberlands, and, as there seemed to be no obstacles, the only wonder is that the engagement was not formally announced. But it was considered discreet not to rush the prince. His moods were uncertain, and they dare not run the risk of an affront to her royal highness. They parted, therefore, unengaged, but it was a good sign that Prince George insisted on his father and mother extending another invitation to her. She accepted with pleasure, and within a dozen hours the news was known in Berlin—three of the servants employed at Penzing being Prussian Secret Service agents.

When the girl returned it was to a young man who had only been thinking of her during her absence. Prince George was a changed being now. Hitherto slow and dreamy, he suddenly became alive and forceful. He had realised at least that there was work for him to do in the world, and he thrilled the princess with his enthusiastic descriptions of what he intended to do with his life.

He proposed to her at Gmunden, the Duke of Cumberland's other country seat, and it was in the beautiful garden there that he asked her to share his fortunes. Princess Mary had consented to act a part for political reasons, and try to get Prince George for her husband, because it was necessary that he should be won for Bavarian interests; but those motives had long since disappeared, and it was because she had learnt to love him that she answered that he had made her very happy by doing her such a great honour.

There was a merry dinner party that night to celebrate the engagement, and a telegram of con-

## AN IMPERIAL MATCH-BREAKER

---

gratulation quickly arrived from the Austrian Emperor. Hard upon the telegram, however, a member of the emperor's cabinet came, who advised the duke to keep his elder son's engagement a secret until it was known for certain what attitude the kaiser would adopt.

Princess Mary could not understand why her engagement should be a matter of world-wide importance, but she had to submit, and Prince George agreed with his parents that they should wait and see.

It was not long, of course, before the kaiser had a complete report of all that had happened during these momentous twenty-four hours at the ducal castle at Gmunden, in Upper Austria. It gave him considerable food for thought. The Duke of Cumberland might be a negligible quantity, but this matrimonial alliance with the Bavarian royal family pointed to a plot to prevent Prussia increasing her power and prestige. "I will have no rivals within the German Empire," the kaiser had often said for the special benefit of the minor kings who cowered before him. He knew that the Bavarians hated the Prussians, and that they would recede from the empire the day they formed a defensive alliance with Austria. The Duke of Cumberland was the most intimate friend of Francis Joseph, and was in a position to influence the old man to make a secret treaty with Bavaria. That was why Wilhelm II swore that he would prevent the marriage of Prince George and Princess Mary of Bavaria.

He had many agents to do his bidding, including at least a thousand spies resident in Bavaria. For thirty years the Prussian Secret Service has had representatives in the royal palaces at Wurtemberg,

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

Munich and Dresden, unknown, of course, to the respective kings; and orders were now issued that a concerted effort should be made to break the engagement between the son of the kaiser's enemy and the princess of the royal house of Bavaria.

The spies worked on characteristic Prussian lines. A paper in Munich was purchased, and in it was started a campaign against the Cumberlands. The journal pointed out that Bavaria could not afford to quarrel with powerful Prussia, and that it would gain no advantage by espousing the cause of a pretender. When these arguments failed the question of religion was raised; and when that met with the same fate, the kaiser's agents started to blacken the character of the young prince.

The Duke of Cumberland's son was depicted as an unprincipled blackguard, and libellous paragraphs, paid for by the Prussian Secret Service Bureau, appeared in several papers, and they were, of course, brought to the notice of Princess Mary. She flung them from her contemptuously, but their constant repetition weakened her considerably, and she began to doubt. Could it be possible that she had made a mistake? The prince's letters were all that could be desired, but it was incredible that so many papers could be animated by feelings of spite against him. Some, at least, must be sincere.

She paid a visit to an aunt who lived in Vienna, and once again she was thrown into Prince George's society. As they were not officially engaged no attempt was made to entertain them specially, and because it was known that the kaiser was prepared to go to any extremes to smash their romance they did not come together under the roof of the Duke of Cumberland. The princess could



## AN IMPERIAL MATCH-BREAKER

---

hardly broach the subject of his alleged fickleness, and, as the prince had never seen the statements in question—in fact, only one copy of each paper was printed for the princess' "benefit," a very old German trick—he was not in a position to refer to the matter at all.

He was devoted to her, and she was very happy when with him, but once he had left her side the old doubts commenced to assail her. Munich was full of gossip concerning Prince George, and everything he did was misconstrued and exaggerated and twisted until Princess Mary hardly knew what to think. She did not wish to be unfair to her lover, but she could not help remembering that her first meeting with him had been arranged by politicians, and that she had once agreed to allow herself to be used in the interests of her country and not in her own. It was possible that the prince regarded her as the girl with whom he intended to make a marriage of convenience. Now, however, she regarded everything in a different light. She loved Prince George, but she knew that if anything happened to prove that she had made a mistake as to his real character she would never marry him.

In addition to the campaign of slander, great pressure was brought to bear upon her to break the engagement. Her own mother was terrorised by the kaiser into expressing disapproval of the Cumberlands, and it was, perhaps, natural that the Bavarian archduchess should have declared that it would be best for them all if Mary jilted her lover. At any rate, her family would have a little peace.

Had the prince been informed of what was going on behind his back there is no doubt he would have defeated the conspirators, but, knowing nothing of the intrigue, he was helpless. Never for a moment

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

did he suspect the influences that were at work, and if family matters prevented him seeing the princess. as often as he wished, she was not less dear to him because she was absent from him.

The only hope of the girl was that the then regent—now ex-king—of Bavaria would champion her cause. He had privately promised his support, and he had said that he would publicly express it when the engagement was officially announced, but the regent had ambitions of his own, and a hint from the kaiser that if he succeeded in pleasing him he would allow him to style himself King of Bavaria, altered his attitude. It was a bribe that was irresistible, especially to Rupert, now ex-crown prince, and he urged his father to give in to all Wilhelm's demands. These included unqualified support in the event of war and a secret agreement not to allow any member of his house to marry into the Cumberland family.

Once the regent was bought over the lovers had no chance. From that time forward the girl's determination weakened. She was told that Prince George was fickle, and that he had been to Berlin, and had astonished everybody with his attentions to the kaiser's only daughter. Then, as ill-luck would have it, he failed to keep an appointment with her, and his letter of explanation never reached her. It was intercepted by her mother, who passed it on to the regent.

Princess Mary was not impetuous, and she thought the matter over for some weeks before she decided to write to Prince George, and inform him that she could not marry him. The letter cost her many tears and much sorrow, but she persevered with it, and when it was posted she experienced an odd feeling of relief. It seemed as though the

## AN IMPERIAL MATCH-BREAKER

---

stress and strain of her secret engagement had been banished for ever.

The letter reached the prince on the morning of May 20, 1912, and when he had read it he sat as though turned to stone. But he was not inactive for long. He felt that unless he saw Princess Mary at once he would explode and he ran to the garage and personally assisted his chauffeur to get his sixty-horse-power motor car ready. When he stepped into it his orders were that he should be driven to Munich in record time.

Shortly after they left the prince became dissatisfied with the pace at which they were going. The car seemed to be crawling, and he went to the driver's seat and took charge himself. For an hour or so the car simply flew along, and it was marvellous how he had avoided an accident so far, because his thoughts were anywhere but with the machine he was driving.

But at last the inevitable happened, and the car, going at sixty miles an hour, collided with a cart, and Prince George was flung out and instantly killed.

A year later his younger brother became the son-in-law of the kaiser, but the Duke of Cumberland remains unreconciled. However, Wilhelm was probably pleased to know that he had succeeded completely in shattering at least one royal romance.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE PRINCE AND THE AMERICAN GIRL

AMONGST the numerous competitors who took part in the race to the North Pole, which was eventually won by Commander Peary, was a royal duke who had for years devoted himself to studying geography and kindred sciences. His Royal Highness the Duke of Abruzzi, cousin of His Majesty the King of Italy, and one of the most popular men in Roman society, had early in his career realised that there is more lasting pleasure to be derived from the acquisition of learning and the following of a profession than in spending one's time at banquets and dances. Not that he was a prig. There was never anyone who enjoyed himself more than he did, but he was naturally of a studious turn of mind, and, having read in his boyhood days of the great feats of the explorers of the past, he resolved that he would be an explorer too.

It was for that reason alone that he entered the navy instead of the army. He wanted to sail in ships and to travel all over the world, and, being full of restless enthusiasm, he had his own way. There were many Italians who thought that he ought to have remained on land, because the army was safer, and the duke was very near the succes-

## PRINCE AND THE AMERICAN GIRL

sion to the throne; indeed, it is not impossible that he may be King of Italy yet.

A man of ideas and energy is always popular, and the Duke of Abruzzi became one of the outstanding figures in Italy's navy. He worked hard and earned his promotion, and all the time he was economising so that he could have enough to fit out an expedition to the North Pole.

His chance came in 1900, when, it will be remembered, he created a sensation by his achievements. If he did not actually find the Pole, he added considerably to our knowledge of the Polar regions, and to-day there is Abruzzi Island in the Arctic Ocean to commemorate his feats.

It is necessary to dwell on the duke's fondness for exploration, for if it had not been for that he would never have met with his first and only love, and the world would not have heard one of the most romantic love stories of modern times.

When the duke had established his fame he was lionised in New York, where learned societies clamoured for his patronage, and the leading hostesses showered invitations upon him. The good-natured prince did his best to please all parties, and with his frank, easy manners and charming ways he became as popular in America as he was in his own country. There was no stiffness about this royal highness, who had lived the life of a sailor amid the Arctic regions, and had cheerfully shared the hardships of exploration with his men. He was a "real white man," to use an expressive American phrase, and it is not too much to say that he scored a success at least equal to that achieved by the one or two other princes who have captured the fancy of the Americans.

As a guest he was the soul of courtesy, and he

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

never seemed to tire of shaking hands or signing his name in autograph books. He had the happy knack of appearing to enjoy it, too, and it was said that no one had ever seen him look bored. Certainly the Duke of Abruzzi was the best ambassador Italy could have had.

Of course, he met lovely girls of all sorts and sizes. The cream of New York, Washington, Boston, and Philadelphian society made his acquaintance. He was young, and a bachelor, and of undeniable position, and it is not surprising that many impressionable girls lost their hearts to him. The prince smiled deprecatingly when he was chaffingly told this. He knew that as a royal duke he would have to wed a princess. Perhaps he sighed as he considered his fate. He would have had to be very hard-hearted, indeed, not to have had his moments of regret when dancing with some of those famous American beauties. But he was a prince, and, therefore, ineligible to marry a commoner, and so he went everywhere, never imagining for a moment that he could lose his heart to a simple girl of the people. The duke must have considered himself love-proof until the critical moment came when he stood at the door of a ball-room in Washington, and, glancing across, saw a tall, fair girl with a lovely complexion, chatting animatedly to an elderly lady by her side.

"Who is she?" he asked, in a breathless tone that indicated more than ordinary interest. His companion, a wealthy New York lawyer, smiled. He had expected to hear that question.

"That's Katherine Elkins," he said with a laugh. "She is considered one of the most beautiful girls in the country."

"She is the most beautiful," said his royal high-

## PRINCE AND THE AMERICAN GIRL

ness with conviction. "Will you favour me by presenting me to her?"

It was usual for the other party to be presented to his royal highness, but on this occasion the duke was led towards the girl, and the ordinary form of introduction followed. Then the others moved away, and the prince and the American millionaire's daughter were left together.

Katherine Elkins attracted men by her loveliness, and held them by her exquisite charm of manner. The duke thought he had seen every kind of American girl, but now he realised his mistake. Senator Elkins' daughter was a revelation to him. Her bright, vivacious manner, her splendid virile common sense and her musical laugh captivated him. If ever there was a case of love at first sight this was one, and the prince, who had not hesitated to linger long with beauty because he could not marry outside the charmed royal circle, now admitted to himself that he was hopelessly in love. Katherine Elkins was the girl of his dreams. From the moment he met her he thought differently on every subject. His royal rank became as dross; the laws of his family an absurdity.

"She must be my wife," he said again and again, and after their first dance became her devoted follower.

I suppose the girl knew her own countrymen too well to worry. Anyhow she and the duke were often seen together. They drove out, and attended dinners at the leading hotels, and it was most amusing to notice how hundreds of necks craned forward whenever the girl took off her gloves. All were anxious to see the engagement ring, for as yet the lovers had not taken the great decision.

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

That they were in love with one another they did not trouble to deny. If Miss Elkins did not surrender at first sight like the duke did, she soon grew to think only of him. It is not amazing. The prince, as I have said, was charming, pleasant, and clever. Quite apart from his rank, he would have made a notable figure anywhere, and, girl-like, the senator's daughter was proud to have him for a cavalier.

Those were strenuous times in the United States. President Roosevelt had succeeded the murdered President M'Kinley, and was stamping his personality upon the world's history. Europe was struggling with various problems, Italy in particular, and the duke was not surprised when he suddenly received an urgent message from his cousin, the king, ordering him to return.

When his royal highness told Katherine that he must go back to his native land she was greatly distressed, and it was only then that she realised how strong her love was. She endeavoured to maintain her composure, but the prince read all he wished to in her eyes.

"I will come back soon," he whispered, as he pressed her hand. "Don't forget me. Remember I love you, and that nothing shall ever part us. Don't let anything or anybody worry you. They'll try to part us, but I love you, Katherine, and I want you to marry me."

The following day he sailed for Europe, and immediately the papers, noticing the absence of an engagement ring, reported that the prince had said good-bye for ever to the American girl. They were rather annoyed about it, too, especially as some of their leading writers had composed glowing articles foreshadowing the day when Senator



## PRINCE AND THE AMERICAN GIRL

---

Elkins' daughter would be Queen of Italy, for in 1902 Victor Emmanuel had no son. But the girl kept her own counsel, remaining in seclusion, and hoping that the public would grow tired of her and her love affairs.

Affairs of state relating to the navy kept the prince in Europe longer than he had expected, and after considerable correspondence between the lovers it was agreed that the Elkins family should pay a visit to Paris, where the duke would come to them. By now, however, the senator, who knew a good deal about royal customs, was beginning to have his doubts. He was fully aware that Katherine loved the duke, but he was determined that the marriage would never take place unless she was given royal rank and treated as an equal in every way. "No morganatic marriage for my daughter," he said to the duke when they discussed the subject. "My daughter is fit to be a queen, and if she is not good enough to be a princess, then she is not good enough to be your wife."

The Duke of Abruzzi protested that it was his intention to marry Katherine as an equal, and that he would not ask her to name the day until he could bring her proof in his cousin's (the king) handwriting that the day she became his wife she would also become Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Abruzzi.

He was perfectly frank about it, and because of that Senator Elkins, no lover of titles, admired him. It was obvious that the duke was very much in love. His devotion was sincere and touching, and both father and daughter knew that he was making a great struggle to secure her every consideration, and that he was willing to make any sacrifices to please her.

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

The formal proposal came long after their eyes had told one another of their love, and when the American girl accepted him his happiness seemed to be complete. All was plain sailing now, he declared. The King of Italy, one of his best friends, would not stand in his light.

"Once I have his permission nothing else matters," he declared. "The king has the power to create you a royal highness. He may want me to give up my claim to the throne, but I will gladly do that."

If the young lady had been ambitious of wearing a crown, her love caused her to abandon it now. She, it must be recorded, was not so anxious as her father that she should take the rank of her husband, but she wisely deferred to the senator's superior judgment.

"What does it matter," she said to a friend; "once I am his wife I shall be happy. They can call me what they like then."

She would have had her way, too, if it had not been for her father, who was wiser, and looked further ahead.

"A marriage is bound to be a failure where one party to it has a sense of inferiority," he said in his quiet though firm way. "My daughter's happiness is all I live for. If the duke can make her happy, then she shall be his. I'd say the same to a workman."

The engagement was finally ratified on the condition that Katherine should not marry morganatically and, furthermore, that there should be no secret ceremony. Everything was to be above board. The old senator, who was intensely proud of his beautiful and clever child, insisted upon that.

## PRINCE AND THE AMERICAN GIRL

The lovers were delighted, and their happiness was infectious. It did people good to see them shopping together in Paris or seeing the sights of Rome, Venice, and Milan. Italian dames of high birth who made the American heiress' acquaintance fell immediately under the spell of her personality. She was obviously no title-hunter. Everybody congratulated the duke, who was delighted, because it meant additional support when he went to his cousin and king to ask for his formal approval.

It was then that the prince met with his first check, and he had been so confident that he would succeed that disappointment stunned him. The king was certainly kindness itself. He had married for love and had no cause to regret it, but when he began to point out certain objections to the alliance between a prince of the royal blood and the daughter of an American citizen the duke's mind became troubled.

"You ask me to create her a royal highness on her wedding day," said his majesty in effect, "but there is something else you have forgotten, my dear cousin. I can make princesses, but I cannot change the young lady's religion. Will she become a Roman Catholic? I fancy that this clever young lady will not surrender her faith simply because she wishes to be your wife."

It was the first time the Duke of Abruzzi had thought of the religious aspect, but, nevertheless, he pressed the king to promise that if they did marry the girl should be received as a member of the royal family. Victor Emmanuel shrewdly promised to see what he could do if the duke assured him that Miss Elkins would offer no objection to changing her religion.

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

That important interview was succeeded by another one. The duke went straight to the hotel where Senator Elkins and his daughter were staying and told them what had happened. In a few words father and daughter crushed his hopes. "I will never change my faith," she said with a pride that was queenly. "I was born a Protestant and I will die one."

Vainly did the prince ask her to reconsider her decision. She was absolutely convinced that it would be a vile and treacherous thing to give up her faith for the sake of an earthly love. When he complained that she did not really love him she could only remind him that if all her acts had failed to convince him of her affection she could do nothing further.

When the father emphatically backed her up the position became hopeless, and all at once the perfect love and happiness that had been the lovers' became clouded, and many dangers and obstacles were created.

Another visit to the king left the position exactly the same. The King of Italy, head of a great Roman Catholic family, the ruler of millions of the same faith, dare not arouse his subjects' anger by creating a Protestant girl of humble ancestry a royal highness and a princess of his house. It would be difficult enough even if she were a Catholic already, but as it was the situation was very delicate and full of pitfalls.

The unhappiest man in Europe was the Duke of Abruzzi. He was constantly flitting between the palace and the residence of the Elkins. Day after day he strove to find a solution of the problem. He was so much in love that he would

## PRINCE AND THE AMERICAN GIRL

not admit to himself that the marriage would never take place. The bare idea would have driven him crazy.

Love is a wonderful thing, and in this case it drove all else out of the prince's mind. He took no interest in science or in the North Pole or in the internal affairs of his own country. Often and often he wished that he had never been born a prince. He consulted the leading lawyers and statesmen of Italy to try and find a way of dispossessing himself of his princely rank and honours. They told him it was impossible. When he suggested such a course to Senator Elkins that wise legislator put his foot down.

"No, I wouldn't let you make that sacrifice," he said. "In the years to come you might be sorry you had surrendered so much. If you can't marry Katherine in your present rank there must be no more talk of the engagement."

The state of affairs was peculiar. Katherine and the duke were in love with one another, their relations were sympathetic, and yet circumstances wholly beyond their control were making the match an impossible one. They had been very happy in one another's society; now there was a tug at the heart-strings whenever they met, inspired by a fear that they might never see one another again.

But matters had to come to a head some time, and at last Senator Elkins advised his daughter to return the duke's ring. She plainly saw that a happy marriage was not to be. Fate would be too much for both of them. She did not doubt the prince, but she knew that the difficulties could not be surmounted. Fearful of a scene that would cause both of them to break down, Katherine sent

## ROYAL ROMANCES AND TRAGEDIES

the ring back by a messenger, who delivered it personally to the prince. Immediately he drove round to her hotel, only to be told that the senator and his daughter had begun their journey to New York. He could not overtake them, but he settled his affairs and started for America at once.

Across the continent for a wife—that sums up the Duke of Abruzzi's last desperate attempt to induce Katherine Elkins to marry him. Never did the fastest steamship seem so slow as it did to the impatient lover, who could not sleep at night. When the Statue of Liberty came into sight at last, he heaved a sigh of relief, but the next moment he was down in the dumps again. Supposing she would refuse to change her mind? The perspiration stood out on his forehead when he thought of that.

There was an array of New York journalists at the landing stage, but he brushed past them and took the train for the Elkins' country house, and there late at night he arrived, not in the guise of a royal prince, but as a humble lover coming to implore the girl of his heart's consent to marriage.

A painful interview ensued, and poor Katherine Elkins' eyes were often filled with tears as she listened to his pleadings, but she could not give him any hope. Marriage on equal terms being impossible, it was beyond reason that they should remain engaged, and eventually she persuaded him to bow to her decision. But it broke his heart, and he looked ten years older when he made the voyage back to Europe.

Several times after that pathetic parting it was rumoured that the engagement was renewed, and it was only a short time ago that Katherine Elkins'

## PRINCE AND THE AMERICAN GIRL

marriage to an American citizen ended the matter once and for all. But His Royal Highness the Duke of Abruzzi is still a bachelor. "I will never marry anyone else," he told Miss Elkins, and he has kept that resolve to this day.

## READ FAMOUS MORGANATIC MARRIAGES

BY  
CHARLES KINGSTON

*See page 4*

Acc. No.	7053
Class No.	A. 7.
Book No.	612

*Cahill & Co., Ltd., London, Dublin and Drogheda.*

A SIAMESE NOVEL

# Spears of Deliverance

BY

CAPT. ERIC REID

---

Crown 8vo. Cloth. 8s. 6d. net.

---

## A FEW PRESS OPINIONS

"A very human book."—*The Graphic*.

"It is an admirable story."—*Evening Standard*.

"Vividly drawn and written with the right perspective."  
*Court Journal*.

---

LONDON: STANLEY PAUL & CO.

31 ESSEX STREET, W.C.2



A NEW WRITER

# The Lure of the Past

BY  
ANTHONY ARMSTRONG

---

Crown 8vo. Cloth 8s. 6d net.

---

**SOME PRESS OPINIONS**

"Has achieved unexampled success in his story"  
—*The Globe*.

"Places its author among the leading writers of the day."—*Church Family Newspaper*.

"An original idea and treats it excellently."  
—*Glasgow News*.

---

LONDON: STANLEY PAUL & CO.  
31 ESSEX STREET, W.C.2

**Over Half a Million already sold of the first 12 titles**

# STANLEY PAUL'S "SELL AT SIGHT" NOVELS

**2/-**  
NET

In F'cap 8vo, printed from clear type on good paper, strongly bound, designed title page with a 3-colour dust wrapper by a distinguished artist.

**2/-**  
NET

## LATEST TITLES

31	ON DESERT ALTARS . . . . .	. NORMA LORIMER
30	UNDER THE INCENSE TREES . . . . .	. CECIL ADAIR
29	THE SAILS OF LIFE . . . . .	. CECIL ADAIR
28	THE DEAN'S DAUGHTER . . . . .	. CECIL ADAIR
27	CANTACUTE TOWERS . . . . .	. CECIL ADAIR
26	THE QUALITIES OF MERCY . . . . .	. CECIL ADAIR
25	A SPLENDID DESTINY . . . . .	. EFFIE A. ROWLANDS
24	LITTLE LADY CHARLES . . . . .	. EFFIE A. ROWLANDS
23	THE MAN SHE MARRIED . . . . .	. EFFIE A. ROWLANDS
22	BENEATH A SPELL . . . . .	. EFFIE A. ROWLANDS
21	THE HOUSE OF SUNSHINE . . . . .	. EFFIE A. ROWLANDS
20	A CHARITY GIRL . . . . .	. EFFIE A. ROWLANDS
19	THE CHEERFUL KNAVE . . . . .	. KEBLE HOWARD
18	SHOES OF GOLD . . . . .	. HAMILTON DRUMMOND
17	A WIFE OUT OF EGYPT . . . . .	. NORMA LORIMER
16	LOVE FINDS A WAY . . . . .	. MAY WYNNE
15	A BABE IN BOHEMIA . . . . .	. FRANK DANBY
14	GABRIEL'S GARDEN . . . . .	. CECIL ADAIR
13	THE HIDING MASTER . . . . .	. DOLF WYLLARDE
12	THE CELEBRITY'S DAUGHTER . . . . .	. VIOLET HUNT
11	THE INKSLINGER . . . . .	. "RITA"
10	ALL SORTS . . . . .	. DOLF WYLLARDE
9	CONCERNING A VOW . . . . .	. RHODA BROUGHTON
8	LOVE'S MASK . . . . .	. EFFIE A. ROWLANDS
7	DR. PHILLIPS . . . . .	. FRANK DANBY
6	THE JUSTICE OF THE DUKE . . . . .	. RAFAEL SABATINI
5	YOUTH WILL BE SERVED . . . . .	. DOLF WYLLARDE
4	THE MISTRESS OF THE FARM . . . . .	. EFFIE A. ROWLANDS
3	HENRY OF NAVARRE . . . . .	. MAY WYNNE
2	THE CAREER OF BEAUTY DARLING . . . . .	. DOLF WYLLARDE
1	JILL-ALL-ALONE . . . . .	. "RITA"

---

LONDON: STANLEY PAUL & CO.  
31 ESSEX STREET, W.C.2

# 8/6 LENGTH NOVELS FOR 2/6

---

## THE NEW NOVEL LIBRARY

New full length copyright novels by leading authors, not previously published in any form, printed from clear type on good paper, strongly bound in large F'cap 8vo, with pictorial wrapper, 2s. 6d. net each. A limited edition extra strongly bound for library use.

### FIRST FOUR TITLES

- 1 **A GALLANT OF SPAIN** MAY WYNNE  
Author of "Henry of Navarre," etc.  
A vivid love story in which the notorious Duke de Ripperda plays a leading part.
- 2 **CORINTHIAN JACK** CHARLES E. PEARCE  
A splendid sporting novel of the early 19th Century, of the "Rodney Stone" type.
- 3 **HER CHOSEN PART** HAMILTON DRUMMOND  
Author of "Shoes of Gold," etc.  
A fascinating historical romance of the Borgia times.
- 4 **THE GRASSHAMPTON STABLE** H. NOEL WILLIAMS  
A well-written story of the Turf, with a strong love interest, which should appeal to all readers of Hawley Smart and Nat Gould.

---

LONDON: STANLEY PAUL & CO.  
31 ESSEX STREET, W.C.2

READ  
“PRESTIGE”

BY  
J. A. T. LLOYD

AUTHOR OF  
“THE UPROOTER,” “QUIS,” ETC.

---

Crown 8vo.      Cloth.      7s. net.

---

**SOME PRESS OPINIONS**

*The Times*.—“Mr. Lloyd has sincerity, a quiet, ironic humour, a warm but not extravagant indignation, and a distinct power in drawing certain kinds of character.”

*The Spectator*.—“The atmosphere is exact and the portraits live. . . . The reader who has a taste for satire will have gathered from our quotations that he must on no account miss Mr. Lloyd’s *Prestige*.”

*The English Review*.—“Full of wit and good thinking.”

*Manchester Guardian*.—“Mr Lloyd is an able writer. . . . His vigour and shrewdness are admirable.”

---

LONDON: STANLEY PAUL & CO.  
31 ESSEX STREET, W.C.2

Over 200,000 Copies sold

# THE EVERYDAY SERIES

EDITED BY GERTRUDE PAUL

*Each volume gives 366 recipes. one for every day in the year, including February 29th.*

In Crown 8vo. 2s. net.

## THE EVERYDAY CAKE BOOK

By G. P. Containing original recipes by Mrs. Lloyd George, Miss Norma Lorimer, and others.

*Lady's Pictorial* says :—" A book of special interest, every variety of cake for each season is given, plain, rich, simple and economical; a book which the enthusiastic housewife will find of immense value."

*Ladies' Field* says :—" A most useful volume."

*Coming Fashions* says :—" Only to glance through the pages is to make the average woman long to try her hand at some of the 365 tempting recipes set out in the simplest and most straightforward manner. It also contains useful hints and valuable advice on cake-making. It should be included amongst the wedding presents of every young bride."

## THE EVERYDAY PUDDING BOOK !

By F. K. Third Edition. One of the most valuable cookery books in existence.

## THE EVERYDAY SOUP BOOK

By G. P. Second Edition.

*Our Home*.—" Arranged on a most admirable plan. A more useful and well-worked out manual it would be difficult to find, and its price places it within the reach of everyone."

---

LONDON : STANLEY PAUL & CO.

31 ESSEX STREET, W.C.2

